

# LUTHERAN EDUCATION

A Journal of the Faculty of Concordia University, River Forest

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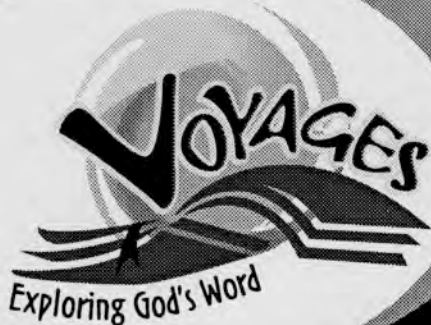
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*by Donald Muchow*

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*by Ted Kober*

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*by Kristin Wassilak*

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Len Bassett discusses the continuing scandal of low teacher salaries in Lutheran schools. The root of the problem, he argues, is the use of "Fourth Source funding," inadequate salaries and benefits for faculty and staff which subsidize the ministries of congregations and schools. The solution, he suggests, is to revisit and put into practice biblical teachings about ministry and stewardship.

*by Leonard Bassett*

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Faced with declining enrollments and lower percentages of member children in their classrooms, some Lutheran schools have considered seeking charter status as a means of keeping their doors open. But can a parochial school do so and still maintain at least a remnant of its school ministry with programs of religious instruction? Richard Zeile explores this question in terms of Federal constitutional law.

*by Richard A. Zeile*

# From Where I Sit

by Jonathan M. Barz, Editor

## Changing and Conserving

I find myself often feeling like Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* lately. It's not so much that I find myself wishfully humming "If I Were a Rich Man" (though occasionally I succumb to that temptation—see Bassett on Lutheran teacher salaries in this issue). More often, I identify with this long-suffering Russian Jew, raising his hands to the sky and singing, "Tradition. Tradition!" Or confronted by some inexplicable reversal of fortune—his cart horse going lame just before Sabbath or his daughter choosing the poor tailor over the wealthy butcher—crying out in a mixture of faith and frustration, "But God, why . . . ?" Or faced with another moment of transition between the old and the new—between the father's right to choose a mate for his daughter and the pledge of love between a young man and a young woman, between the traditions of the village and the revolutionary impulse of the outsider—considering first "the one hand" and then "the other." Some of the most appealing scenes in this marvelous musical are those in which we watch the proud milkman shed his ancient prejudices and embrace a new way of seeing and doing—a new way of *being*—in a changing world.

Admiral Donald Muchow, addressing the issue of change in this issue of *Lutheran Education*, insists that in the new millennium "change, not stability, is the constant." How we respond to change will be crucial in determining whether we survive and prosper in the new century. Adapting to change, he asserts, is not only necessary for survival; it's the only appropriate response to our Creator, for "to believe in a living God is to see change as an inevitable dimension of life."

The pace of change in our society is undoubtedly accelerating, as Muchow vividly illustrates. Indeed, as chief of Navy chaplains he enjoyed a front row seat during some of the most dramatic moments of geopolitical change in recent decades. Given Lutherans' legendary resistance to change—"How many Lutherans does it take to change a lightbulb?" "Change?"—the warning he offers is vital. Too often, as a denomination and as a school system, we have been guilty of digging in our heels, stubbornly clinging to "the way we have always done it." The changing demographics of 21st century America alone suggest that we will need to adapt in many ways if we are to communicate the Gospel effectively to those around us. And yet . . .

On the one hand, (as Tevye might say), the word "Lutheran" in the name of this journal suggests a people often characterized by an unwillingness to change, an intransigence which sometimes



handcuffs Lutheran education (and Lutheranism generally) as it seeks to expand the Kingdom of God. On the other hand, the word "education" has just as often been equated with mere faddishness or, more recently, with unprincipled acquiescence to the demands of the marketplace. It is also worth remembering that although change itself is inevitable and unavoidable, the same is not true of every specific change. No institution can remain vital and viable without responding to change, it is true, but in an age of rapid, incessant, and bewildering change, neither can an organization passively accept each successive innovation as though it were a historical inevitability.

Only with a clearly articulated and commonly shared sense of mission and identity can any institution be sure of the appropriate response to any specific change. Then, as George Keller put it in an address to the assembled faculties of the Concordia University System this past May, our schools can operate with a "radical conservatism," deliberately and selectively adopting change in order to conserve what is truly central to their mission, spiritually and academically.

For the sake of discussion, let me offer an example. Two of my children will be five years old next September, so I'm very interested in recent changes in how schools are structuring their kindergartens. More than once I've been told, "The trend these days is to offer only full-day kindergarten." Now, there may, in fact, be a statistical shift toward full day kindergarten. This trend, however, is the result of decisions made by human beings, not an irreversible force of nature, like continental drift. Faced with such a trend, Lutheran schools need to decide on an appropriate response based on a clear sense of their own values and mission: Is this change what is best for our five-year-old students? Does it truly serve the best interests of the families to whom we are in ministry? Is it consistent with our beliefs about the value of home and families? Or at the minimum, is it a change we are willing to accept in order to support the larger mission of our school?

There have been few greater proponents of change and reform than Ralph Waldo Emerson. "Reform is affirmative," he wrote 160 years ago, "conservatism negative; conservatism goes for comfort, reform for truth." But even Emerson admitted that neither conservatism nor reform alone is an adequate response to change: "Each is a good half, but an impossible whole. Each exposes the abuses of the other, but in a true society, in a true man, both must combine. Nature does not give the crown of its approbation, namely, beauty, to the rock which resists the waves from age to age, nor to the wave which lashes incessantly the rock, but the superior beauty is with the oak which stands with its hundred arms against the storms of a century, and grows every year like a sapling." What a beautiful image for Lutheran education in a landscape of constant change: deeply rooted *and* continually growing, standing fast against storm and tempest *and* reshaping itself to reach higher and farther!

Perhaps what is called for is a revised version of Reinhold Niebuhr's well-known prayer: "God grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know and hold fast to those things which ought not be changed."✠

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## The Future Ain't What It Used to Be

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*Admiral Donald Muchow, the former Chief of Chaplains in the U.S. Navy, currently chairs the Board of Directors of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.*

For my theme, I have turned to a great Eastern philosopher, Eastern meaning New York state and philosopher meaning that great Hall of Fame catcher for the New York Yankees, Mr. Yogi Berra. You probably remember and maybe even use some of the great things Yogi talks about. "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." "No one goes to that restaurant any more; it's too crowded." And, "The future ain't what it used to be." It is this last saying of Yogi's that I will use as the skeleton for what follows.

A few years ago, my mother-in-law died at the age of 101. She was born in 1895, and during the span of her life—just over a century—she went through enormous changes, from candles to lazars for light, from horse and buggies to spacecrafts for travel. She lived through television, computers, airplanes, automobiles. And despite all that change, she lived well and adapted beautifully to it all. She lived in a world she as a child had never imagined would take place.

The changes that are unfolding in our lifetime

## *The Future Ain't What It Used to Be*

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today are even more dramatic than what my mother-in-law experienced. For example, when some of today's college students were still in grammar school, the geopolitical structure of the world went through a great change. The Berlin Wall came down, 40 years of cold warfare between West and East ceased, and the Soviet Union is now the former Soviet Union. Shortly after that, while still on active military duty, during the early 1990's I found myself in the city of Warsaw, Poland. I was there to help some of the Eastern and Central European nations begin to reconstruct their chaplaincies for their new defense forces. For many years, any type of faith expression on the part of those in the Soviet Union was pushed underground. I met in this particular conference, in a building erected specifically to doom the West. It was the headquarters for the Warsaw pact nations.

When we walked into that building and sat down at the huge conference table, a Polish general sat next to me. About the third day of the conference, he turned to me, leaned over, and said, "Chaplain, you know my wife and I were married in the woods." "No," I said, "I didn't know that"—and I didn't know what he was driving at. Then he continued, "Chaplain, you know that my children were baptized in the forest." Now a light bulb went on. And then he concluded, "You know, Chaplain. For more than 40 years the Soviets tried to suppress matters of faith and matters of the heart. They took over our land, but they never captured our heart." Today, that Polish general is elated because he can worship, no longer in the woods, but in the open. And he and so many other of his colleagues in that great nation, are experiencing a change that they never expected. For them, "the future ain't what it used to be."

Most students who are entering college today are beginning to show up as the beginning wave of the "echo boom," the millennial generation. Students who were born around 1982 are coming into college about now. For such students, unlike many of their teachers and their parents, the future has changed considerably. Let me give you a few illustrations. For these echo students:

- Grace Kelly, Elvis Presley, Karen Carpenter, and the E.R.A. have always been dead.
- A George Bush has been on every national ticket, except one, since they were born.
- The Kennedy tragedy was a plane crash, not an assassination.
- There have always been automated teller machines, jet planes, computers, and TV.
- Toyotas and Hondas have always been made in the United States.

- Women sailors have always sailed on U.S. Navy ships.
- These students have never heard a phone “ring.”
- They have never dressed up for an airplane flight.
- They have never used a bottle of Wite Out.
- “Spam” and “cookies” are not necessarily foods for them.

These are only examples of the changes in just the past 18 years.<sup>1</sup>

Around the world, the same truth holds: “the future ain’t what it used to be.” In this past year, some dramatic changes have taken place. There are today more than one billion pages on the world wide web, and a million are added every day. The six billionth living person was born, probably back in October last year. The human genome project is about complete. About change, Mark Twain made the observation, “I’m all for

progress, but not for the change that it brings.”

The Chinese have a saying: “Change is a dragon. You can resist it and be devoured, or you can ride it and prosper.”

I suppose most of us are somewhere between those

**My point is this: You are being launched into the 21st century, with a future that is unlike any before. Change, not stability, is the constant.**

two extremes, but my point is this: You are being launched into the 21st century, with a future that is unlike any before. Change, not stability, is the constant.

Amid all these changes, the popular American futurist Faith Popcorn predicts that the most significant changes are taking place in understanding the human body. For example, the studies in biotechnology, the deciphering of DNA, the definition of death and life, are all being reexamined. Genetic mapping, nano-technology are all swirling around us.

All this having to do with the human being reminds me of the story of the three fishermen who were out on the lake one day. They were having a wonderful afternoon until one of them caught a mermaid. She flopped over the side of the boat and said, “Oh, please, will you throw me back into the water. I can’t exist outside of

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<sup>1</sup>The examples are drawn from the annual “mindset list” published by Beloit College in an effort to help its faculty members understand college freshmen.

## *The Future Ain't What It Used to Be*

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it for very long. If you do, I'll grant you each a wish." The first fisherman, who was rather doubtful about all this, said, "Double my IQ." And in an instant she did, and he began to spout off all sorts of physics and higher mathematics. His boat mates were really impressed. The second fisherman said, "I like what you did to him. Why don't you triple my IQ?" It happened, and the second fisherman began spouting all kinds of poetry and Shakespeare and wonderful things. The third fisherman was next. He said, "I want you to quadruple my IQ." The mermaid said, "No, you don't want that. You can ask me for a million dollars or something else, but you don't want that." He said, "You promised, if we throw you back in, I'll get the wish." So, in an instant, the third fisherman turned into a woman!

For those fishermen, fact or fiction, "the future ain't what it used to be."

On October 4, 1999, *Forbes ASAP* magazine, had in its 252 pages more than 45 articles about convergences. Authors included people like Bill Gates, Kurt Vonnegut, Tom Wolfe, Tom Peters, and futurists like Alvin Toffler. They described something immense taking place in our land today. Things are flowing together and creating new hybrids, things that we thought are separate are really united, and there are new connections, new networks, new ways of seeing the world. Whether in quantum physics, microbiology, religion, e-commerce, medicine, or the like, "the future really ain't what it used to be."

### **Responding to Change**

You know what happens when change hits you. Some people change when they see the light; others change when they feel the heat. In his recent book *Soul Tsunami* (1999), Dr. Leonard Sweet describes three human responses to change. He says change is like a tidal wave, and when it hits, it really hits. The first reaction to it might be denial. He says, you just deny that the western world today is sitting on a demolition site while the new world is emerging from the rubble and ashes. To deny is to refuse to see the world from any perch other than your own comfort zone. In a tidal wave, most people are swept away immediately: the few who do learn to tread water, tire quickly, and eventually go under.

The second response to change Dr. Sweet discusses is "Yep, it's coming, and I'm going to duck it." I'll hunker in the bunker—I'll be a survivalist and go hide. Dr. Sweet goes on to tell a story about a farm family in North Dakota during the Red River flood of 1997. They knew the flood was coming and they got all of their friends and relatives to build up a barrier of sandbags around their house and farm buildings. They were successful. They sat in their little bunker, and they watched their neighbor's house, cabin, building, and cars go floating by. Now, you can do



that, you can hunker in the bunker, but you, in trying to save yourself, can lose your whole neighborhood, your city, your nation, even your world. As Jesus observed, when you seek to save your life, you lose it.

The third response to change Dr. Sweet talks about is to hoist your sails and weigh your anchor. "Let's go. The surf is up!" Be like ancient Noah. He adapted to a new situation. He built an ark, a new kind of structure, and in the midst of great sea change, he was able to carry out not only God's will but the survival of his own family. In this day and age, we need more Noah's, not more bunker hunkers or comfort seekers! There is no other way to live in the 21st Century than to move past denial, past ducking, and on to sailing.

Universities such as Concordia, River Forest render a great service to the Christian community, the nation, and our world as they prepare people for a rapidly changing future.

Most of the literature on change today identifies three facets that are always at work when change occurs. The first facet involves the characteristics of change. Is it controlled or uncontrolled? Is it temporary or permanent?

Is it desirable or undesirable? Is it gradual or sudden? Is it personal or communal?

The literature also talks about the coping capacities of individuals who are being affected by change. How well do we discern the change, or are we like the frog who heats up in the proverbial kettle and finally dies because it never discerned what was going on? How curious and patient are we as individuals when it comes to change? How well do we perceive our own feelings in the face of change? And how do we use our minds?

After examining these characteristics and coping abilities, there yet remains the third facet of change, the context. Does change come in peace time or during

**To believe in a living God is to see change as an inevitable dimension of life. Oh, surely God's love and grace are unchanging—they and God's being are unchangeable, the Scriptures are clear about that. But Anderson concludes, "In our life, adapting to change remains a necessity for survival, not only for survival but for proper response to our Creator."**

warfare? When you are alone or when you are in the company of others? Does change hit you when you're healthy or when you are ill? Does it happen at home or when you are in a strange surrounding? That has some impact on how you respond.

That's the way the current literature dissects the facets of change, but I think they have left out a fourth facet. This fourth facet of change, rarely spoken of yet critical, is best indicated by what Herbert Anderson (1984) wrote in his book *The Family and Pastoral Care*. He said all of life is caught up in change, and because God is still renewing, preserving, and creating, nothing on this side of the grave is complete or finished—and who knows about the other side. To believe in a living God is to see change as an inevitable dimension of life. Oh, surely God's love and grace are unchanging—they and God's being are unchangeable, the Scriptures are clear about that. But Anderson concludes, "In our life, adapting to change remains a necessity for survival, not only for survival but for proper response to our Creator."

## **Change and the "God-Facet"**

I'm speaking of the "God-facet" in change and the role religious faith plays in it. To illustrate this, let me reach back into my own history and share with you a couple of vignettes. Shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the former deputy director of the KGB came to the United States in his new role as the minister for personnel in the Russian army. He had about a week-long visit to Washington, D.C. In the middle of that visit he had marked off a block of two hours to meet with the three Chiefs of Chaplains of our military. He would not say ahead of time what he wanted to talk with us about. The door to the Pentagon conference room closed, and General Solyarov sat down, and here's how he began. He said, "I need your help. I have inherited an army that is 20% absent without leave on any given day. The men and women in this army don't know the difference between right and wrong. They can't even keep a commitment. I need your help."

We looked at him and said, "Why did you come to us with this problem?"

He said, "For years I've been watching you. We noticed that among the American military person there is a quality that we don't have in our army today. It's the quality of faith in God and a willingness to lay down one's life for another. Seventy years ago we tried to suppress that from our nation and in its place substitute communism and atheism, but now we have a harvest that we can't live with."

Since that meeting, we have done things in the American forces and chaplaincies to help with the Russian situation, and great strides have been made in the Russian military to get back to a moral and ethical base, even teaching the basic facets of Christian faith and life in their enlisted and officer training schools. That's

quite a contrast to the cavalier attitude that sometimes we Americans take toward such issues of forming and helping our young.

A second vignette concerns General P. X. Kelly. General P. X. Kelly was the Commandant of the Marine Corps in the Middle East. In 1981, a terrible event occurred in Beirut, Lebanon. Two hundred and sixty-one Marines were assassinated by a truck that blew up the Marines' barracks near the Beirut airport. It was the worst peace time loss of life in the Marine Corps' history, which goes all the way back to 1775. You knew there would be a congressional investigation, and there was. General Kelly was summoned before the congress to give an account of his stewardship of the lives of his Marines. Before he left, people tried to say to him, "Why don't you just not tell the whole truth." Others said to him, "Kelly, it's time for you to resign."

General Kelly replied to those inept advisors by saying, "The Marine Corps and I are a family. I will never abandon my family, even in the face of this kind of disaster." When General Kelly had finished his testimony before the U.S. Congress, he left an indelible mark on all who heard or read the testimony because of his great faith in God and his admiration for the young men who had given their lives in this horrible assassination. There was no doubt that his faith perspective gave him the strength and gave him the wisdom to handle the toughest of questions.

My second tour of duty as a Navy chaplain was hospital duty in Philadelphia. The hospital is no longer there, but during the Vietnam War it was the East Coast center for all double and triple amputees brought back from the battlefield. When I arrived for duty, I was told that I had 725 of those patients as my spiritual charge. I honestly couldn't sleep the first few nights I was on those wards. Some of these men had been brought back from Vietnam about 72 hours after they were hit. The pain and the scarred and tortured bodies that were hanging from hooks in these beds were etched too deeply into my mind and my heart to allow a decent night's sleep for several weeks. An unusual thing would happen every Thursday afternoon in the wards of the Marines and Navy corpsman. Every Thursday afternoon they would receive a visit from Chesty Puller, the most decorated Marine in World War II and in the Korean War. Chesty Puller would link up with the police chief in Philadelphia, Frank Rizzo, and they would come through the wards where those amputees were lying. They would touch the hand—if there was a hand—or the forehead, say a few words, look them straight in the eyes, and bring them a kind of hope. Even today in the Marine Corps, before people go to bed in the barracks at night, it's almost like the old Waltons TV show. Someone will say, "Goodnight, Chesty Puller, wherever you are." He's such a hero to the Marines and rightly so. They made pastoral

calls—big Frank Rizzo and little Chesty Puller—every Thursday afternoon.

They would take three or four hours to get to every bedside of every Marine in that hospital. It was an incredible thing to see. Chesty Puller was a very devout Episcopalian and Frank Rizzo a Roman Catholic. Nevertheless, they found the time in their busy schedules to reach out and touch from their faith the lives of those men who lay in great pain and in great trauma. It was the kind of change neither one of them wanted, neither the men who lay in those beds nor Chesty and Frank Rizzo. But they adapted to it because of their faith perspective.

In a September 1989 issue of *Time* magazine there was a very interesting story of an interview that took place between Mother Teresa and a *Time* reporter. It went something like this:  
Reporter: "Mother

Teresa, what is it like to be so famous and known all over the world for your charitable work?"

Mother Teresa: "It's His work."

Reporter: "But, Mother Teresa, you are so well known and so famous for helping the poor and the homeless and the

downtrodden and the ill. Your Sisters of Charity are doing a tremendous amount of work. What's it like to have that kind of fame and glory?"

Mother Teresa: "It's His work. I'm but a pencil in the hand of God. Pencils don't do anything unless moved by that hand of God."

That was about the end of the interview. The *Time* reporter couldn't think of anything to top that, a faith perspective to a change that was so powerful, for a woman like Mother Teresa to go into the hovels and hardships of all kinds of people

In the Navy we often talk about setting the anchor firmly, from which then we can adjust to prevailing winds or tides or currents. However, if you drag your anchor, you don't have a chance to respond with strength to the assaults of change. We are not in the business as Christians of dragging anchors, especially when it comes to God. By His grace we are enabled to plant our anchor firmly through faith.

worldwide. She responded to that change with not only the gift of love but also the gift of being a reflector of Jesus Christ, her Savior.

## **Anchoring Our Swing to the Future**

In each of these instances, the God-facet was prominent and decisive. Change took place, and faith gave each a pivot point from which to swing a response to that change. In the Navy we often talk about setting the anchor firmly, from which then we can adjust to prevailing winds or tides or currents. However, if you drag your anchor, you don't have a chance to respond with strength to the assaults of change. We are not in the business as Christians in this land or in this church body or in our schoolhouses of dragging anchors, especially when it comes to God. By His grace we are enabled to plant our anchor firmly through faith. Scripture and our confessions constitute the two prongs of this anchor, and our connection to God through Christ by the Holy Spirit ensures a solid stance for anchoring our swing to the future.

One of nature's great examples of change and transformation is what happens between the caterpillar and the cocoon and the butterfly. For two thousand years, the butterfly has been a symbol of Jesus Christ, who sprang from the cocoon of death to new life. During your years as students here at Concordia, many of you have deepened your faith in that Jesus Christ, taking seriously your class theme about being imitators of God, and coming out of darkness into His marvelous light, to live as children of light. I suspect also that some of you are still wrestling with Jesus Christ and with His impact in or upon your life. Others perhaps among you would say that right now He has no real bearing upon my life.

Before we leave this place tonight, I must say this: Jesus Christ is worthy not only of serious consideration but even of worship because, first of all he lived successfully in a changing world. When Jesus Christ walked this earth, concrete was invented, which created a whole new opening for those in the construction business. You weren't limited by rocks and boards, but you could do all kinds of things with concrete. Some interesting exegetical study is going on right now. We often talk about Jesus being the son of a carpenter and working in His father's carpenter shop, perhaps. But the word for "carpenter" may well mean construction engineer in modern parlance.

The second great change that took place in Jesus' time was the introduction of codices as the primitive books that we have. No longer was oral transmission the dominant way to exchange knowledge; now it could be written down. Not only did He live successfully with those kinds of changes. He also created *wholesome* change.



## *The Future Ain't What It Used to Be*

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The wholesome change I'm talking about is the kind of change that comes to turn over the power of sin in people's lives, the power of death in people's lives. That's the hub of our faith: to transform lives, to actually get into the heart and swing it around in a direction no longer *away* from God and others but *toward* God and others.

A few years ago some archeologists corroborated a story found in scroll in Rome about a monk named Telemachus. Telemachus was a monk in a poor monastery outside Rome. For years he had never left the grounds. Then one Sunday he sensed a calling from God to leave the monastery, but he didn't know where he should go. A few hours later, he found himself high up in the stands of the Roman Coliseum. It was a Sunday afternoon and the games were going on, games of gladiators and lions, Christians being assassinated, ripped and torn apart by animals. What he saw appalled him. He looked out into the center of the Coliseum and called, "Stop this madness!" Nobody listened, nobody paid him any attention. So he called again, "Stop! This is crazy!" A few heads turned as if he were an annoying mosquito. He cried again, "Stop this madness!" Then some people grabbed him, dragged him down the steps of the Coliseum, and put him into the center of the ring.

Suddenly, Telemachus found himself face to face with a gladiator with raised sword. The gladiator was looking to the audience for a thumbs up or a thumbs down. All of the thumbs went down. On that Sunday afternoon, Telemachus died in the Coliseum. That's a tragic story, but what happened next is not. Suddenly a hush came over that entire Coliseum, and people began to walk out and leave without a word. From that Sunday on there was never another Roman game played in the Coliseum. One man who knew the difference between right and wrong was appalled by what he saw and took action, offering himself wholeheartedly to reverse the course of events he saw. He changed the Sunday afternoon games in Rome.

Here among the pews, I am convinced that neither the spirit of Telemachus nor the spirit of Jesus Christ is lacking. I am convinced that the gifts that the Lord has given to you, whatever your age—staff, teacher, student, guest, friend of the university—have been given to you in order to make a difference in another's life. And then, my friend, for you, "the future ain't what it used to be."<sup>3</sup>

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## Conflict an Opportunity? I Hate Conflict!

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**D**eath of a loved one, suffering from a severe disability or serious illness, birth of a child, marriage, retirement, receiving a new call—Christians easily recognize certain events as prime opportunities for ministry. Conflict is often another critical incident where people need Gospel-care and are open to ministry.

Whenever I teach biblical peacemaking, I monitor faces in the audience for reactions to the teaching. One time I couldn't help noticing a man who seemed disturbed and restless throughout the day. We finally met during the afternoon break. Chuck introduced himself, and tears began to well up in his eyes.

"Ted, I just don't know how much more of this I can take!"

"Why Chuck? Did I say something to offend you?"

"No, I'm not upset with you. What I don't want to accept is conflict as an opportunity. I hate conflict and I avoid it in any way possible. Biblical peacemaking is confronting me with how I handled

## *Conflict an Opportunity?*

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my ministry as a professional educator for 30 years. I don't think I can make that kind of change this late in life."

Chuck served as the administrator for a Christian school system, grades K-12. He feared conflict. He had experienced the results of conflict gone bad: parents yelling, kids in fisticuffs, school board members making demands, teachers accusing, staff fired, and needy children pulled out of school. As a believer, Chuck desired to manage his schools in peace. After all, isn't that what we should expect in a Christian school?

Chuck learned how to fake peace. Deny the underlying conflicts, and over time they might heal. Patch things up the best you can, and the trouble will go away. Smooth things over every time someone comes into the office with a gripe. The problem with his methodology was that it usually backfired on him.

I reminded Chuck that God sent Jesus into the world to take the full punishment for our sins. God forgave Chuck his sinful ways of dealing with conflict. I encouraged him to trust God, obey His Word for responding to conflict, and leave the results up to God. He thanked me for my counsel, but doubted that he would be able to apply it in his life.

A year later, I presented another peacemaking seminar in Chuck's town. Chuck returned for a second dose, but this time brought others with him—his entire faculty and a few school board members and parents. A couple of his teachers and board members expressed appreciation for my returning so they could experience the life-changing event that Chuck raved about. One faculty member expressed it this way:

"We wondered what happened to our administrator after he came back from the seminar. He is a changed man. The Chuck we knew always avoided conflict. Now he takes it on directly, and you wouldn't believe the difference he is making in our school."

Chuck himself shared: "My entire ministry is changed. I still don't like conflict but I have learned what great ministry opportunities conflict provides."

## **God's Way of Resolving Conflict: The Four G's**

Conflict may be defined as "a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone's goals or desires." These differences can range from simple disagreements such as where to go to dinner to more serious controversies that lead to divorce, lawsuit, or someone leaving a profession.

Misunderstandings, differences in goals or objectives, and competition over limited resources all contribute to conflict. However, Scripture teaches that another force initiates or exacerbates our squabbles. St. James writes: "What causes fights

and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives that you may spend what you get on your pleasures" (James 4:1-3).

What causes conflict? *My* desires. *My* wrong motives. Serving *my* personal pleasures. Sin almost always incites our conflicts. Actual sin may not spark the dispute, but two sinners in a disagreement find it all too natural to inflame the fight, defending their righteous causes with sinful thoughts, words and actions.

God's people must admit sin's role in conflict in order to respond to it biblically. To deny our sin is to deny our need for Jesus, who shed his blood on the cross for us.

Acknowledging our sin leads us to repentance and faith, where healing and comfort are found in God's forgiveness. St. John instructs, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8-9).

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True peacemaking is founded on the ministry of reconciliation, that while we were yet sinners, God reconciled the world to himself through his only son, Jesus (see Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:11-21). As forgiven children, we demonstrate love for our Father through our ministry of reconciliation to each other.

In his book *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, Ken Sande (1997) summarizes what God teaches about resolving conflict in four principles, which Ken refers to as "The Four G's:"

**Glorify God**

*How can I please and honor God in this situation, and how can I give witness to what he has done for me through Christ?*

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**Get the log out of your eye**

*How have I contributed to this conflict and what do I need to do to resolve it?*

**Go and show your brother his fault**

*How can I help others to understand how they have contributed to this conflict?*

**Go and be reconciled**

*How can I demonstrate forgiveness and encourage a reasonable solution to this conflict?*

### **Glorify God**

*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks, or the church of God — even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. (1 Cor. 10:31-11:1)*

Our first responsibility in stewarding our conflicts is to *glorify God*. There's a radical thought! My initial response to disputes is usually not, "How can I glorify God in this situation?" Instead, I am often motivated by "How can I get what I want out of this deal?" (Refer to James 4:1-3.)

Glorifying God happens when we take time to remember God's role in our conflict and then respond to it His way. My self-centered approach often assumes that the dispute is between just me and my opponent. As Christians, however, we confess that God sacrificed dearly, involving himself in all our conflicts. Jesus died because of our conflict with God, and our fights with others usually involve sin. Therefore, we have the privilege and responsibility to place our conflict into the context of God's perspective on the issue. Conflict provides three opportunities for the child of God: to glorify God, to serve others, and to grow to be more like Christ.

Last year I met a young man whose example illustrates this point. To fulfill graduation requirements during his senior year in public high school, Chris registered for a work-study program in the gym for a few easy credits. The honor system required him to record his time for approval by his teacher at the end of the semester.

At first, Chris completed the required tasks and documented his work. But over time, he slacked off in his responsibilities. "After all," he rationalized, "as long as I produce a completed log, I'll get credit." Near semester end, he realized that he had



neglected to maintain his log. He began to plug empty time slots with contrived tasks and then stopped himself.

"What are you doing, Chris? You're a child of God. This is a lie. I can't make up stuff I didn't do. But now what? Like, if I'm honest, I'll fail this class and maybe miss graduation. What will my teacher say? Or my friends? Or my parents! Lord, I have made such a mess of things—help me to know what I should do."

Chris prayed for God's guidance right up to the moment he faced his teacher, Mr. Thomas.

"Well, Chris, let me see your log."

"I can't show it to you, Mr. Thomas."

"Why not?"

"Because it's a lie."

"What?!"

Chris looked Mr. Thomas in the eye and explained that he often skipped his scheduled gym time and intended to falsify his records to receive credit. But because he was a Christian, he realized his sin and decided to be honest with himself and his teacher. Chris confessed that he failed to fulfill his responsibilities and deserved an "F." Mr. Thomas was incredulous.

"Why would you tell me this? I don't understand!"

"I told you, Mr. Thomas. I'm a Christian, and because of what Jesus has done for me, I cannot live this lie. Let me tell you about Jesus and what he means to me."

Chris then shared the Gospel with his teacher. A tear rolled down Mr. Thomas' cheek, and he shook his head.

"I have never met a student like you. You're right, Chris. Your work is incomplete and you deserve to fail. But you demonstrate an integrity that exceeds what I've found in any other student. I'm going to pass you anyway."

Although Mr. Thomas made no profession of faith, Chris understood that his responsibility was to do what was right before God. Chris' confession of sin also became his opportunity to share the good news of Jesus. He turned his own struggle with sin into an opportunity to glorify God, serve others, and grow to become more Christ-like.

## Get the Log Out of Your Eye

*"You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." (Matt. 7:5)*

Miss Johnson's eighth graders were studying the Lewis and Clark expedition. In

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small groups, students prepared presentations to the whole school as final projects for the series. Creative juices flowed as the students built props to support their drama. Conflict arose because the artists were building their creations in the school hallways, where their excited voices and noisy activities disturbed other classes throughout the school. Miss Johnson heard complaints from fellow teachers and her principal.

This teacher could have justified her class because of their good intentions, hard work, and unbridled enthusiasm, and she could have explained away the offense based on adolescent growth phases. But she recognized that the offense her class caused was an opportunity for peacemaking and for teaching. She confronted her students, complimenting them on their energetic commitment to their work yet identifying how they had sinned against other teachers and students.

Earlier in the year, teachers in fourth through eighth grade had taught biblical peacemaking through *The Young Peacemaker* (C. Sande, 1997). Miss Johnson used this occasion to review the "Five A's of Confession."

### **The Five A's of Confession**

Admit your sin	ADMIT, I'm it. Broke the bond that's tightly fit.
Apologize	A-POL-O-GIZE. Tell no lies. It's my fault—I recognize.
Accept the consequences	AC-CEPT, gladly kept a consequence I won't forget.
Ask for forgiveness	ASK you 'fore we're through. Forgiveness—what I need from you.
Alter your choices in future	ALTER now, this is how: "God, change my heart. Please do it now!"

Her students drafted a group confession. Upon permission from individual teachers, the eighth graders filed into each room and read their prepared confession. Miss Johnson also confessed her failure to direct her students more carefully. Each teacher and class responded with the granting of forgiveness.

The principal, teachers, teacher's aides, and students were all blessed by the confession of Miss Johnson's class and by the forgiveness shared. Pupils and teacher glorified God, served many adults and children, and grew more Christ-like through this opportunity.

### **Go and Show Your Brother His Fault**

*"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two*

*of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. (Matt. 18:15)*

Loving confrontation may sound like an oxymoron. Nevertheless, our heavenly Father confronts us *in love, for love*, and exhorts us to do likewise. Instead of restoring our neighbor gently (Gal. 6:1), however, we often find it easier to deny conflict altogether or to talk *about* our opponents to someone else. Some Christians contend that they follow Matthew 18:15 when they get in their adversaries' faces to tell them off. Confronting others in love for their good is rarely done well, even among children of God.

Such was the case in the conflict over church/school issues between Pastor Stan and Susie, the school board chair. Each sinned against the other in public meetings and private sessions. Susie gossiped about Pastor, judging his motives about nomination elections and

accusing him (to others) of manipulating funds and people. Meanwhile, Pastor Stan informed his supporters that Susie was leading a protest against him, undermining his role of pastor, especially questioning his spiritual authority.

Church/school relationships deteriorated and positions became

polarized. Church staff were pitted against faculty, and the two camps became entrenched for the anticipated battles. The beloved third grade teacher was publicly chewed out by the Director of Christian Education (DCE) in front of confirmation students over the use of a classroom. Tensions escalated when the principal of 25 years resigned because of stress. The teachers banded together and demanded that the DCE be fired or they would strike and not teach school. The church education board asked for the DCE's resignation, and he and his family left the church. Church members loyal to Pastor and the DCE called for immediate investigation and resignation of education board members. Parents of school children formed their own action committee, circulating petitions for Pastor's removal. The other casualties? Long term church members left the church or became inactive, and several children

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were transferred to the public school.

Pastor Stan and Susie were not the only sinners in this war. But had these two leaders been able to confront each other in love early in the controversy, they may have helped avert the tragedies. With Bible study and prayer, our peacemaker team individually coached Pastor and Susie to meet one another, to confront, repent, confess, and forgive. Pastor denied any serious friction with Susie, dismissing our counsel. Susie resisted similar advice, but finally agreed to approach him.

The first meeting seemed fruitless. Pastor denied any responsibility for the skirmishes, and Susie felt justified in her anxieties that he would shrug her off. But within a few days, Susie's gentle words began to weaken Pastor's confident justifications. He came back to our team for more counsel and prepared to make confession. Before the entire church staff, school staff, and church lay leaders, Pastor Stan confessed his sinful words and actions that contributed to the conflicts, including his shrugging off of Susie's confrontation. Among others, Susie publicly forgave her pastor and confessed her own sins of gossip and slander. Tears of joy and relief softened hardened hearts from the two factions, and this miracle of reconciliation planted seeds of peace which remain today, some three years later. Confronting in love provides the opportunities to glorify God, serve others, and grow to be more like Christ.

### **Go and Be Reconciled**

*"First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. (Matt 5:24)*

Peacemaking is not passive but active. Jesus says, "Go!" not "Wait around until the other person comes crawling to you." Reconciliation requires disputing parties to meet with each other, not complain to others. Christians forfeit the grace that comes from mutual confession and forgiveness when they avoid the very individuals with whom they should reconcile.

But the parties are not the only ones who suffer. Something we often overlook is how bystanders are affected by our actions. Consider this: when Christians fight, at least ten others watch. If you are a Christian leader, such as a teacher, principal, pastor or board member, your silent audience is much larger.

Ask any child's teacher what he or she learns about a student's home. Kids develop keen observation skills, and in school they frequently share what they witness about their parents' behaviors. Teachers often know much more about a family's lifestyle than even the family is willing to admit.

Yet, in one school served by a peacemaking team, the teachers acted as if the students turned off their observation skills at school. The faculty were conflicted, and three distinct factions formed. Instead of going directly to those with whom they were in disagreement, teachers gossiped about one another. Some condemned the administration. Others blamed the school board. During lunch breaks, recesses, and quick meetings in the hall, the arrows of blame were quietly shot. These underground attackers convinced themselves that their secret conduct was unnoticed.

In a staff retreat, the peacemakers asked the teachers how their pupils interpreted their gossip and blame-shifting. The room fell quiet. No one had stopped to consider what the children were learning. What have the kids heard or seen? Were there not children standing around the corners in the halls, sitting nearby the lunch-room talks, and playing close to teacher huddles at recess? Upon reflection, they admitted that their students must be observing some of their sinful behavior. What were kids reporting to their parents about the fighting staff at school? What effects were these home reports having on the parents, many of whom were church leaders? What were eager young minds learning from their teachers' examples?

This confrontation led to a time of personal reconciliation that most of these Christian educators had never experienced. Applying Jesus's words, individuals approached one another to confess sin and forgive one another. As they reflected further, they committed to make peacemaking a goal for the upcoming school year—in classroom curriculum and in providing living examples as Christian staff. God is blessing their peacemaking as enrollment grows and their professional friendships strengthen. Most of them will never appreciate how much their living faith is helping shape future leaders' lives.

"Going" to be reconciled glorifies God, serves others, and conforms us to the likeness of God's son.

## **Opportunity for Ambassadors of Reconciliation**

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are, therefore, Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. (2 Cor. 5:18-20a).*

Because of sin in conflict, we have a message for quarreling people. Ambassadors of reconciliation are charged with the privilege and responsibility to bring comfort to the guilt-distressed and the message of repentance to the sin-



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entrenched. Opportunities called conflicts abound in our personal lives and among those we serve.

Chuck learned to overcome his fear of conflict when he began to see it as an opportunity for ministry. Chris glorified God when he confessed his sin to his teacher and found an opportunity to confess his faith in Christ. Eighth graders demonstrated their faith in Christ when they took the opportunity to confess their sins to other students and teachers. In another opportunity, a pastor and school board chairman led many others to reconciliation when they applied God-pleasing methods to confront one another. School faculty recognized their personal opportunities for teaching students as they modeled reconciliation among themselves. These Christian ambassadors recognized that the conflicts with which they struggled were opportunities for the ministry of reconciliation. Parties and witnesses were all comforted with the message of forgiveness and the peace that passes all understanding.

Let us tell the good news about Jesus to each other, as we confess our sins and forgive one another as God through Christ forgives us. May God grant us each his grace to live our lives in such a way that Christians and pagans alike will recognize us as Jesus' disciples.

*[Jesus said,] "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). ♪*

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(All of the above resources are available from Peacemaker Ministries.)

## Trying Is the First Step Toward Failure: Law and Gospel Meet the Lutheran Educator

*Kristin Wassilak is Director of the Deaconess program at Concordia University in River Forest, where she has served since 1990. She holds a Master of Arts in Religion and has served The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as a reconciler and on the Northern Illinois District's Ministerial Health Committee.*

Expectations bombard the educator. Evaluative procedures and measurable outcomes for students and teachers permeate education. How are we addressing the pressure on Lutheran educators to succeed? It is no secret that unmet high expectations of our church workers play a role in the LCMS shortage. Ted Kober, Bruce Hartung and Alan and Cheryl Klaas have documented that the lid has blown off the kettle of boiling sorrow and disappointment.

My own experience confirms the strife. I am a Synodical reconciler, a member of my district's Ministerial Health Committee, and a former member of the LCMS Commission on Women. In almost 11 years serving the deaconess students at Concordia University, River Forest, I have watched our graduates challenged and sometimes defeated in the same ways as teachers and pastors.

What I have missed seeing in my 15 years of ministry is intentional, long-term spiritual care for church workers. How are we preaching Law and

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Gospel to our preachers, teachers, and others in church vocations? Who is serving our servants with God's Word? Spiritual caregivers help a person to identify the Law in their life and present an enthusiastic, unequivocal, blow-me-away proclamation of the Gospel!

In the Winter, 2000, *Lutheran Education*, two articles identified foundational spiritual characteristics of Lutheran teachers. One article lists foundations to the teaching ministry:

1. Teach and share the Word of God;
2. Obey God's call to teach;
3. Serve as a Christian example and role-model;
4. Enable children to live their Christian faith;
5. Teach and promote the Christ-centered curriculum (Schnacke, p. 119).

Another article lists nine characteristics of a spiritual leader:

1. Studies God's Word;
2. Shares personal faith;
3. Applies Law and Gospel appropriately;
4. Exhibits a passion for ministry;
5. Demonstrates integrity;
6. Acts courageously;
7. Equips God's people for service;
8. Cares for others;
9. Prays (Stueber, p. 135).

What educator feels she has fulfilled such expectations? Although, in context, the lists are descriptive rather than prescriptive, their *effect* upon the church worker may be crushing guilt or self-satisfaction, both effects of the Law.

Because of the Law—professional and spiritual expectations—our church workers feel the burden of their office. The result is that, "The institutional church has become a wounder of the healers rather than a healer of the wounded" (Manning, 1990, p. 14).

I submit this article out of a desire to serve our church workers with the Law and Gospel. First, I challenge educators' inclinations toward the Law. Second, I present the clear, bold Gospel that heals the soul. After concluding remarks, I provide the reader with a short list of appropriate resources to share with colleagues and families.

## **Trying is the First Step Toward Failure**

Homer Simpson hardly springs to mind as an eminent philosopher, but the other week my husband and I caught a rerun where Homer defended his habitual laziness

saying, "Trying is the first step toward failure!" Like Homer, we often want to excuse ourselves from even beginning a big project or a rough day or from reconciling a strained relationship because we fear failure. Our fearful thoughts paralyze us. Unbeknownst to Homer, he also made a theologically relevant statement. Failure results whenever we try to fulfill God's Law.

Rev. Donald Moldstad (1994) summarizes well the effects of the Law on our hearts:

Those who are closest to operating the knives of God's law are most apt to get cut. We deal with that law all the time in preaching, teaching and counseling. It carves and cuts. So when the called minister of God falls into sin, or looks back on past failings, it can drive the preacher to despair. We are reminded all the more of the great difference between what our members or students imagine us to be and what we see in our own hearts. (p. 13)

How do you try to fulfill the Law? Do you have desires to achieve, to get the job done right, to be successful, to have a winning season, to register good achievement test scores, or to maintain a well-disciplined happy classroom? Add your own desires. Does the Gospel enter only as an afterthought—a backup reassurance that God will make it all right if it all goes down the tubes?

Let us first consider Law-thinking habits for educators.

### **1. Trying for Successful Outcomes**

An educator's day tends to focus on successful outcomes. Because successful outcomes are not always possible, teachers may be bombarded with feelings of failure. State and federal requirements continue to intrude on schools and teacher certification. High standards are commendable, but the received message, intended

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or unintended, may be that measurable results in the classroom are more important than the spiritual care of the people in it. According to the Law, trying to have successful outcomes is the first step toward failure.

We also try to have successful outcomes in our other vocations. The more vocations we have—spouse, parent, child, educator, friend, colleague, student—the greater our opportunity for failure. Guilt over previous failures overwhelms our efforts to begin anew. Trying to do it all is the first step toward failure.

### **2. Trying to Measure Success by Others' Approval**

Another attempt to live according to the Law is to measure our success by the degree of others' approval. Inevitably we fail to please others or they fail to affirm us, sometimes both. Anger at ourselves and others' may follow. In these words of Henri Nouwen (1981), we see an example of the havoc the Law may wreak on the life of ministers:

Anger in particular seems close to a professional vice in the contemporary ministry. Pastors [educators] are angry at their leaders for not leading and at their followers for not following. They are angry at those who do not come to church for not coming and angry at those who do come for coming without enthusiasm. They are angry at their families, who make them feel guilty, and angry at themselves for not being who they want to be. This is not an open, blatant, roaring anger, but an anger hidden behind the smooth word, the smiling face, and the polite handshake. It is a frozen anger, an anger which settles into a biting resentment and slowly paralyzes a generous heart. If there is anything that makes the ministry look grim and dull, it is this dark, insidious anger in the servants of Christ. (p. 23-24)

The drive for affirmation and others' approval is the first step toward failure.

### **3. Trying to Measure Others by the Law**

Remember how the disciples quarreled and battled for position? Remember how eager they were to dismiss the little babes in arms and the unclean women? In what ways do you also measure others by the Law? Do you find yourself unable to truly rejoice with others' successes because of jealousy or anger? Do you recognize in yourself the publican who lifted up his eyes to heaven and rejoiced that he was not like the tax collector? Do you think the Lord has blessed others with more talents, money, or success than you?

When we compare ourselves to others, "If the examination is solely a self-examination, we will always end up with excessive praise or blame" (Foster, 1992, p.

30). I will think that either I am doing well for myself and pat myself on the back, or that I am not a good teacher because I don't have the passion or drive of a colleague. We use the Law to place blame on others and on God. We tend to avoid self-knowledge because each of us knows our depths are scary. We do not want to expose our true thoughts and feelings. These are symptoms of a life lived in the Law. Trying to measure others using the Law is the first step toward failure.

#### **4. Trying to Measure Myself by the Law**

"I'm trying to be Jesus Christ! I want to save everyone!" confessed my friend, a veteran teacher. She admits how often she catches herself trying to replace Christ and fix the ills of the students and their families. It is a heavy burden to take on the role of cure-giver! It is the first step toward failure.

We do so want to believe we can fulfill the Law's demands. We use many phrases to this effect. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps! Get a handle on life! I'm looking forward to . . . when I can get it all together! Guess what? The bootstraps break, the handle falls off, and we never get it all together. Trying to wrestle oneself out of one's sins is the first step toward failure.

What remedy do we tend to seek for this failure? Manning (1990) describes it: "Though lip service is paid to the gospel of grace, many Christians live as if it is only personal discipline and self-denial that will mold the perfect me" (p. 15). We focus on ourselves rather than God and "fluctuate between castigating ourselves and congratulating ourselves because we are deluded into thinking we save ourselves" (p. 77). We are like a dog trying to catch her tail. The more she fails, the more she chases. The more she chases, the faster she goes to try to catch up to her tail, but her tail just goes faster, too.

Brennan Manning wrote *The Ragamuffin Gospel* exactly for those who are despairing. The book, he explains, is for:

the bedraggled, beat-up, and burnt-out . . . for the sorely burdened who are still shifting the heavy suitcase from one hand to the other . . . for the wobbly and weak-kneed who know they don't have it all together and are too proud to accept the handout of amazing grace . . . for the inconsistent, unsteady disciples whose cheese is falling off their cracker . . . for the poor, weak, sinful men and women with hereditary faults and limited talents . . . for earthen vessels who shuffle along on feet of clay . . . for the bent and the bruised who feel that their lives are a grave disappointment to God . . . for smart people who know they are stupid and honest disciples who admit they are scalawags . . . and for myself and anyone who has grown weary and discouraged along the Way. (p. 12)



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The intended audience of *The Ragamuffin Gospel* is the same intended audience of Christ's Gospel. The life of tail chasing according to the Law is the first step toward failure but the Gospel turns failure into fulfillment.

### **Failure is the First Step Toward Trying**

#### **1. God's Gift of Gospel—Is It Really Enough?**

Has the Gospel gone stale? Do you take God's love for granted? Manning (1990) responds, "When I become so spiritually advanced that Abba is old hat, then the Father has been had, Jesus has been tamed, the Spirit has been corralled, and the Pentecostal fire has been extinguished. Evangelical faith is the antithesis of lukewarmness. It always means a profound dissatisfaction with our present state" (p. 167). The Gospel profoundly affects all that I am.

Is the Gospel *really* enough to stop my tail chasing? Isn't there something I must do to improve myself? Into my dissatisfaction steps God who knows me fully and loves me as I am. When it gets through to my head and heart, I realize, "I can accept myself as I am. Genuine self-acceptance is not derived from the power of positive thinking. . . . *It is an act of faith*" (Manning, 1990, p. 46). By God's grace, our relationship is restored. We can take no credit for this radically positive thinking. Still, can I truly be content with my continued failure to catch my tail?

#### **2. God's Gift of Failure**

Failure is God's gift? We expend so much effort and time to avoid failure. Instead, Christ gives us His peace, shalom, wholeness, wherein we live in freedom to risk failure (Manning, 1990, p. 175). Failure is God's gift that exposes our attempts to fulfill the Law. Failure is God's opportunity to shower grace upon us.

The profound storyteller Walt Wangerin, Jr. (1984) explains, "Finally, I am convinced that we are not called upon to succeed at anything in this ministry. We are called upon to love. Which is to say, we are called upon to fail—both vigorously and joyfully" (p. 89). Dr. Richard Eyer (1994), chaplain and professor, counsels pastors who are ministering to the hurting to urge the hurting person "into this struggle in order to lose it (Luke 17:33) so that Christ can raise him up to new life" (p. 50). In the Gospel, failure and loss become gifts of God!

The words of St. Paul to the Corinthians express how God addresses our failure to be perfect: "And such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:4-6).

### 3. God's Gift of Temptation

Of course, God does not actually tempt us. Do we not ask the Father, "and lead us not into temptation?" So, can it be that God also turns temptation into a gift for us? This bold prayer testifies to God's gift of temptation:

Rid me of the delusion, Lord, that the day will ever come in my life . . . when I will not face temptation. Indeed, it might be best for me if I am tested more often, lest I become complacent, careless, and falsely self-confident. If temptations are light in my life for the moment, let me always be prepared for the hour when greater ones shall appear. And let me not be so self-deceived as to think I can easily overcome the greater temptation when it comes." (Deffner, 1992, p. 14)

What an upside-down surprising God who works in the things that appear worst to us. Temptation appears to us as Law; God hides His loving and gracious work in the midst of temptation. What Satan and we mean for evil, God means for good! (Gen. 45:1-8; 50:20).



"Man of Sorrows" by Albrecht Dürer. Used by permission of the Concordia Historical Institute

### 4. God's Gift of Suffering

We would like to believe that God wants us to be happy and free of pain here on earth. It does not make sense that almighty God comes to us in failure, temptation, and suffering. The proof that God *is* in these is found in the Christ who experienced the ultimate failure—death—and who was tempted in every way as us. Look at the Christ portrayed in Albrecht Dürer's woodcut "Man of Sorrows." Do you sense the cup of suffering our Lord bore in our stead? Dürer made his own form as Christ to confess his understanding of Christ bearing that cup on his behalf.

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Jesus tells his disciples that they will also drink his cup. We also drink it. We would much rather it pass us by. Death in our family, among our students, and in our church families is just one example. Each time the cup is passed to us, we ask, "Why?" It can feel as if God is punishing us. We certainly don't want to drink it.

But Nouwen (1996) urges us to down the cup, dregs and all (pp. 93ff.). We drink because the cup is not what it appears. Look again at the suffering Christ. The cup we drink *cannot* be punishment for our sin— what you see reflected in the posture of Christ is the punishment for our sin. It has been accomplished! As we are crushed like grapes that the cup of suffering becomes the cup of joy (Nouwen, p. 51). We drink because the cup is not what it appears.

We construct logical arguments to explain why the cup has come to us. We believe it may be punishment for our sin. We believe we may have brought the punishment on ourselves. We believe there is something we can do to overcome the suffering. These are attempts to figure out God's work. Ultimately, the logic always breaks down. We cannot fix the sorrow. We feel helpless.

Several weeks ago, a friend remarked to me, "This life is *hard*! And I'm tired of people trying to tell me that I can do something to make it better!" Let us not rob each other of God's gift of suffering by trying to take it away or fix it. Rather, just as Christ suffers with us, let us accompany our brothers and sisters in our suffering, free of trying to figure out how and why it is happening. Let us assist each other in directing our complaints to God, just as we see in such Psalms as Psalms 35, 69, and 109.

In Christ's suffering He fully knows our suffering. It makes no sense that God chose Christ to die for us, but in the non-sense of our own suffering we can know for certain that Christ is with us.

When we are feeling low, even the Gospel portrayed by Dürer seems to be Law. Either we are laden by guilt for causing Christ to become "The Man of Sorrows," or we cannot believe that we are worthy to receive the gift of grace won by Christ. Christ had to be perfect because we are not. This truth shifts our focus to what He did in our place so that we can be freed from focusing on our failures. But this truth does not come easy to a burdened heart. When we are defeated, we need the Gospel repeated in its full sweetness over many months or years.

### **5. God's Gift of Absolution**

God's gift of absolution comes abundantly in so many forms that we may be used to it. But even absolution's easy availability teaches us the very heart of God.

In worship we hear, taste, touch, smell, and see God's forgiveness in the words of absolution given by the pastor, in the Word of God, in Holy Baptism, and in the Lord's Supper. We are also free to go directly and privately to the pastor and to a sister or brother in Christ for confession and absolution. Our God is not stingy. Absolution is in abundance!

Absolution is *for you*! It strengthens and sustains you in your daily dying to sin and rising to new life. We go with confidence to worship and to private study knowing that we are accepted by God even before we ask for forgiveness (Manning, 1990, p.189). Our failure to treasure God's gift of absolution does not diminish the gift. To God be the glory!

## 6. God's Gift of Prayer and Study

Since God has come and is coming to me, I desire to be with God in daily conversation and in daily meditation on His Word.

The Word and God's teaching is a "medicine for tortured souls" and meditation upon it is "an antidote for one's own egotistic inventions" (Gieritz, 1960, p. 330). God's Word is refreshment to my soul

**Our lives are changed by the forgiveness won by "The Man of Sorrows." Trying is the first step toward failure, but now that Christ has tried and been perfect, *you cannot fail!***

and water that quenches my thirst. Nouwen (1981) explains that the solitude of individual study is not privacy or therapeutic escape from pressure but a place where distractions do not lure me from the work of conversation with God. When we are alone, there we meet our true self apart from the masks we wear with others (pp. 25ff).

Do you wrestle with what to use as devotional material? "My personal experience of the relentless tenderness of God came not from exegetes, theologians, and spiritual writers, but from sitting still in the presence of the living Word and beseeching Him to help me understand with my head and heart His written Word . . . When the religious views of others interpose between us and the primary experience of Jesus as the Christ, we become unconvicted and unpersuasive travel agents handing out brochures to places we have never visited" (Manning, 1990, p. 42).

For years I read more *about* God's Word than *in* God's Word. As I look back on

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that time, I have recognized it as my desire to distance myself from Scripture. I was enamored by devotions urging me to become a better Christian, to be more self-disciplined, to think more positively, and to plan my responses to tempting situations so I wouldn't be tempted to sin as often (!). Thank God for delivering me from the Law of self-improvement and back into His Word.

Do you wrestle with being consistent? Remember, aiming to be consistent is the first step toward failure. In the Gospel, get over it. If we require ourselves to maintain a string of 365 days of devotions, the Bible will not be open for long. Out of sheer willpower one can "devote" regularly for days or weeks, but sooner or later it all falls apart.

Just like a dieter who chucks the whole program because he blew it for a week, we have a tendency to give up on our ability to have a time apart with God. We may even question the sincerity of our faith. Instead, God has given you the gift of trying. You are already forgiven! Forget yesterday and just pick up the Bible today. God's Word is like an all-you-can-eat diet that makes us slimmer the more we consume.

### **7. God's Gift of Trying: I Try Because I am Already Forgiven**

Our lives are changed by the forgiveness won by "The Man of Sorrows." Trying is the first step toward failure, but now that Christ has tried and been perfect, *you cannot fail!* What moves us to try to do good? The Law may do so in an outward sense (as with many classroom discipline techniques), but the Law never changes the heart. Heart changes are the result of the Gospel. We want to do good: "Freedom from the law does not mean total absence of the quality of effort and demand in the Christian life. Freedom from the law means that man asks what God commands" (Wingren, 1994, p. 205).

### **8. God's Gift of Vocation**

Is the educator's calling Law or Gospel? Yes. Certainly vocation is Law in that there are professional expectations and we recognize how we fail to meet them. But God's primary use of vocation is Gospel, even when it is a terrible day. God is using us to feed His lambs. He is providing care for them using our mouths, hands, ears, and eyes. We boldly serve because we cannot fail!

### **9. God's Gift of Community**

People in our community who are weak and troubled are also God's gift. We tend to avoid the needy, however, when we are already overburdened with tasks and requirements. A child whose parents are divorcing is bleeding inwardly, but we feel

like we have nothing left to give. If a colleague is enduring an abusive marriage, we may avoid caring for her because we feel inadequate. It is highly uncomfortable to be out of control in the midst of suffering. Little, if anything, makes sense to the sufferer or to the caregiver.

In the Gospel we become content in losing the struggle for control. Vulnerability to and compassion for one another are met with joy, not avoidance. In Christ, we care for one another out of the Gospel, not the Law. The Law demands we have the "right thing" to say and answers to give. There are no right things and there are no answers that will satisfy a sufferer. The Law cannot bring comfort. The Gospel brings Christ, "The Man of Sorrows," who shares their pain.

### 10. Everything as God's Gift

Psalm 136 is a beautiful confession of the everlasting lovingkindness of God. As the Psalmist recalls God's deeds for Israel, the reader also recalls Israel's unfaithfulness. Even when Israel thought God was distant, He was still working for them.

Satan would like us to believe God is distant or absent in suffering and pain—that we are alone when we go through trials. "Do not by any means," Walther wrote, "permit the devil to portray Christ to you differently from what He is in truth" (1986, p. 108). "The Man of Sorrows" is never absent (Deut. 31: 6,8; Matt. 28: 20).

### Concluding Remarks

As the Gospel refreshes us, we desire to serve others with that same Gospel. The following are some suggestions to encourage spiritual care, rooted in the Gospel. Perhaps they will serve as a springboard for further discussion in your setting.

In the personal life of the educator:

- "The Man of Sorrows" carries the burden of changing the lives of students and educators! Consider how that impacts your life and your classroom.
- We naturally devote time to achievement: to get the job done right, to be successful, to a winning season, to higher achievement test scores, to a disciplined happy class, etc. Make your own list—to what are you devoting time and energy each day?
- Where we find our home, in Law or in Gospel, becomes the home environment of the classroom and our interactions with others. If the reader finds herself dwelling constantly on what she *should be doing* or what she *is doing so well* and little time meditating in God's Word about what *Christ has accomplished*, it is a



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red flag that the Law is more at home in her than the Gospel. The remedy is not to look for more ways to pull up one's bootstraps, but to flee to sources of refreshing, unadulterated, abundant Gospel (God's Word and prayer, worship, Lord's Supper, a colleague or friend who understands the Gospel).

In our schools and churches:

- Evaluate what you use for private devotions, for school chapel, for staff devotions, and for children's sermons and what you listen to on the radio. Where is the Gospel unburdening your soul? Where are the Sacraments discussed for your refreshment? Sacramental life is foundational, not supplemental. The very essence of spirituality for a Lutheran is Sacramental because we are centered in what God has done for us. If the Gospel is not primary in the materials, the Law *is*. There are a multitude of Scriptural study booklets, but if the study is primarily Law the ultimate effect is despair or self-righteousness. Discuss with your pastor, principal and staff how the Gospel is incorporated in your school and the materials you use.
- Look again at "The Man of Sorrows." The fact that this picture is God makes no sense. The more we talk about "should's" and "good Christian boys and girls don't . . ." the more this picture fades. Consider how the Gospel impacts classroom discipline.
- Teachers may ask, "How may I serve my fellow teacher with the Gospel?" Pastors may ask other church workers, "How is your time apart with the Lord in prayer and study? If you are struggling, may I pray for you?" Principals may ask their teachers, "Are you feeling under a weight today?" Simple questions such as these signal Gospel care.
- Let us pray with one another. Let us study God's Word together.
- Many Lutheran teachers have had only a few weeks of discussion in college on

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the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. This is insufficient to overcome the bombardment of the Law in our sinful flesh, the post-modern culture, and the Christian media that tends to favor the Law. Law/Gospel distinction is the highest art experienced and tested over time. Perhaps a veteran teacher, a wise lay woman, or your pastor can lead a study of Law and Gospel. The staff could read C.F.W. Walther's practical book "The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel" and discuss its implications for life and the classroom.

In LEA and in our Districts and Synod:

- As the LCMS seeks to address its church worker shortage, let us discuss the long-term effects of Law-oriented thinking and practices. Burnt out people desperately need the Gospel but tend to hear only the Law, even when the Gospel is given to them. In their struggles, they hesitate to believe that the Gospel is really for them. They need Gospel care in abundance and over time. How can we better supply them with the one thing needful?

## **Suggested Readings**

### **Devotionals**

*The One Year Bible (NIV)*. (1986). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House. Each calendar date has a reading from the Old or New Testament, a Psalm, and a Proverbs selection.

Schumacher, F. J., ed. (1994-1996). *For all the saints: A prayer book for and by the church* (4 vols., 2 vols per church year). Delhi, NY: American Lutheran Publicity Bureau. Available from our seminaries' bookstores. Volume I ends at Pentecost 2001.

### **Gospel-Rich Books (listed from most to least applicable to the readership)**

Manning, B. (2000). *The ragamuffin Gospel*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers Inc. 240 pages. If you only read one book, read this one, an updated version of the original.

Matzat, D. (1990). *Christ esteem: Where the search for self-esteem ends*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers. 207 pages. A must-read.

Veith, Jr., G. E. (1999). *The spirituality of the cross*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House. 127 pages. A simple, profound presentation of the important elements in our spiritual life.

Peters, T. C. (2000). *Cherish the Word: Reflections on Luther's spirituality*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House. 126 pages.

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Eyer, R. C. (1994). *Pastoral care under the cross: God in the midst of suffering*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House. 155 pages. Particularly applicable for church staff.

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## Lutheran Teacher Salaries: Equal Sacrifice?

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**L**ow salaries for teachers within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod system is not a topic that has suddenly been discovered by keen observers. The question of woefully low salaries has been around almost as long as our Synod. I say "almost" because there was a time when Lutheran teacher salaries were quite good in comparison to public school salaries. Early on in Synod's history, a Lutheran school teacher was typically paid \$90 per year. His counterpart in the public school was paid about \$65 per year.

This situation, of course, needs to be put in perspective (Stellhorn, 1963). First of all, historically the Lutheran school teacher was usually a pastor who had been pressed into service due to a lack of available teachers. Pastors and teachers were typically trained in the same institution in Germany and were quite interchangeable when it came to their service. Few public schools existed, particularly in the Midwest where most of the early congregations in Synod were located. Those that did exist were themselves tuition schools and were generally

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considered to be "pauper schools." These were schools for very poor families. Salaries for teachers in these schools reflected that philosophy (Stellhorn, 1963).

Recently, there has been much more attention focused on the salary issue. In addition, the impact of low salaries on teacher recruitment has been documented. This past fall, Richard Schnake (2000), writing in *Lutheran Education*, shared research that should have a significant impact on moving the conversation forward. In part, he wrote "Both the survey evidence and the interviews confirmed not only withdrawal from the teaching ministry as a concern, but also an increasing shortage of qualified Lutheran teachers professionally formed in an LCMS teacher education program. Both concerns were described as being connected to, or even caused by, finances: the perceived low salary of the Lutheran teaching ministry and soaring cost of tuition to enter it" (27).

Bruce Kueck (2000), writing in the *Reporter* in August of this past year, also has contributed to the current conversation surrounding the issue. He has looked closely at the 1999 Compensation Study for Commissioned Teachers and Directors of Christian Education, released in spring of 2000. Kueck does an excellent job of interpreting data that clearly delineates and verifies the significantly lower salaries of Lutheran educators compared to their counterparts in public education. While the data is significant and certainly adds clarity to the ongoing conversation, it does not get at the root causes of the problem.

Kueck does begin to crack the door when he quotes Dr. Carl Moser (who at the time was the Director of the School Ministry department of the Synod's Board for Congregational Services) as saying, "Teachers are paid on the basis of how little they (congregations) need to pay in order to get someone to serve, rather than on the basis of how much teachers should be paid based on their experience, educational preparation or abilities. I personally believe Lutheran school teachers should be paid as much as their public counterparts, or more" (Kueck, 2000).

### **Teacher Salaries as "Fourth Source Funding"**

The problem, as I see it, is caused by the almost universal use of "Fourth Source Funding" by congregations within the LCMS.<sup>1</sup> The concept is that there are four

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<sup>1</sup>The term Fourth Source Funding first gained recognition in the late 1980s or early 1990s. I first heard the term used while attending a conference sectional—I cannot recall where, but believe it was in the Michigan District—that was being led by Bob Rogalski, who at that time was the administrator of a Lutheran school in

sources of funding available to support a Lutheran school. **First Source Funding** includes those monies that are received through offerings and tithes. Typically, this is considered to be the most important source of support for the school.

**Second Source Funding** refers to monies received as a result of tuition and fees. This source of funding has become increasingly important to schools, particularly in the Midwest and in some instances has become more important than First Source funding.

**Third Source Funding** is usually considered those fund raising efforts that are supported by the school or organizations such as the PTL sponsored by the schools. They typically consist of magazine sales, food-product sales, or other such schemes. Third Source Funds may also consist of monies received from government sources, such as title monies or support for the school lunch program. Also in this category are monies received from the congregation or school

**Fourth Source Funding** refers to low or inadequate salaries and benefits for the faculty and staff that subsidize the ministries of the congregation and school. This is the “funding” that directly leads to large numbers of teachers leaving the teaching ministry of the church or discourages our young people from considering teaching within Lutheran schools as a career.

foundation. Increasingly, as they look for long-term financial solutions, more of our schools are encouraging the start-up of these foundations. Excluding monies received from the school/congregation foundation, Third Source Funds typically contribute less than 12-15 percent of the overall annual budget. Many administrators consider Third Source Funding as important for the fellowship opportunities provided as for the monies generated by the activities associated with them.

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Arizona. I am not certain if Bob coined the phrase, but since that time the term has gained wide spread use by administrators throughout Synod.



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### **Ministers, Laborers, and Stewards**

In order to bring focus to the concept of Forth Source Funding, I want to look briefly at "ministry" and how we as Missouri-Synod Lutherans view it; how we view a "laborer" as scripture refers to those involved in the sharing of the Gospel; and how stewardship practices within the LCMS allow for the continuation of unequal sacrifice. Far more can, and should, be discussed about this topic, but space is limited. It is my hope that this article will serve as a catalyst for discussion throughout the church.

I have presented to numerous congregations on the topic of funding their Lutheran school. When I am asked to present it has almost always been the case that the congregation is experiencing serious financial difficulties. It is also almost always the case that the workers—pastors, teachers and staff—are seriously underpaid. Typically they have not had a salary increase in two or more years, and this on top of already embarrassingly low salaries. In congregations with these serious financial problems there are no easy answers. Almost without exception they appears to lack of sense of union, a feeling of togetherness, a feeling of shared purpose. Teachers, pastors, and staff are often looked upon as hired help, to be used as though they are a commodity.

Each of us as a Christian is in ministry. Each of us is a minister. Sometimes the Bible speaks of the ministering responsibilities of every Christian. At other times it uses the term to refer to the role of individuals who have been called into what has historically been referred to as "the public ministry." Our purposes here are not to attempt to clarify the current debate in the church concerning whether the Lutheran teacher's call is derived as a branch of the pastoral office, or whether it comes from the generalized office of the ministry of the Word and Sacrament. For our purposes it is enough that we recognize that from the time of the first constitution of Synod to the present day, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has regarded the (male) Lutheran teacher as a member of the public ministry. Women were added to the roster of Synod at the 1973 New Orleans Convention. Lutheran teachers, then, are in public ministry as they serve congregations as teachers and administrators in their Christian schools (Janzow, 1981).

In Acts 4: 32-36 we learn of how the early Christians "were one in heart and mind." Further, "no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had . . . , there were no needy persons among them." Clearly, these early Christians were focused on sharing equally. In I Corinthians 9:7-12, we read:

Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? For it is written in the Law of Moses: Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain. Is it about the Oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more?

Read this again carefully; it is pretty potent stuff. Finally, Paul writes, "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages'" (1 Tim. 5:16-18). Paul is not in the least ambivalent about how those in public ministry should be paid for their labors.

What about us? How does Paul speak to those of us who "labor" in the schools of the LCMS today? As a school administrator I have reviewed literally hundreds of salary schedules, from both public and private schools. Salary schedules come in a variety of formats, but almost all have in common compensation based on experience and years of service. These are often referred to as "five by twenty" or "six by fifteen" schedules. Typically the five/six (or more) refers to the number of steps on the scale for academic advancement—bachelors, bachelors plus eight hours, bachelors plus sixteen hours, masters etc.—and the fifteen or twenty the number of years service.

All of the hundreds of salary schedules I have seen have in common, somewhere on the scale, a Masters with ten years service. Because of this, when I present to congregations I first share with them the information about salary schedules and then direct them to this point on the schedule they have adopted for their school. Let me share with you how that presentation usually goes.

Recently I was invited to a congregation in the upper Midwest, for all of the reasons stated above, and this is what I discovered: A teacher in the public schools of

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that community could expect to earn—at ten years service with a Masters degree—\$48,930. The corresponding teacher in the Lutheran school will earn \$32,480. The administrator in the local public school—again, at the MA and ten years of service level—will be compensated \$64,430. His/her counterpart in the Lutheran school will receive \$37,480.

In order to serve this parish, the teachers were sacrificing \$16,450 per year. The administrator was sacrificing \$26,950. I asked this congregation if they really understood what they were expecting of their workers. Unfortunately, the story at this parish—and sadly, many others—gets worse. Prior to my visit I asked the pastor to share with me stewardship data from the most recent year. Their records indicate that the average adult confirmand, excluding those under twenty-one years of age, contributed just \$647 for

the entire previous year.

My question to them was

“Is this equal sacrifice?”

To each of you, to the church, to all who minister in His name, I ask the same question: is this equal sacrifice?

### **Continuing the Conversation**

Each of us must be willing to speak out about the financial sacrifices our

church-workers are making. I often hear colleagues suggest it is not realistic for us to expect our teachers to be paid what our counterparts in public education are paid. My response is, why not? Is it not realistic to expect that all who thresh the grain share equally in the harvest.

I would encourage each of us to discuss the issue openly with all those with whom we are in ministry. District presidents, district education executives, pastors, principals, teachers, laymen, college presidents and placement directors, all of us, need to consistently and constantly bring the issue forward as we interact with congregations and boards that have decision-making authority. We cannot continue to allow our young workers to be placed in situations where the concept of equal sacrifice is not alive and well. To do so will only perpetuate the problem. The

**We cannot continue to allow our young workers to be placed in situations where the concept of equal sacrifice is not alive and well. Equal sacrifice needs to become a permanent part of our vocabulary if we are to continue to provide public ministers for our Christian schools.**

concept of equal sacrifice needs to become a permanent part of our vocabulary if we are to continue to provide public ministers for our Christian schools.†

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## Call for Articles for *Lutheran Education*

*Lutheran Education* welcomes manuscripts addressing issues relevant to Lutheran educators at all levels, from early childhood to university, in the classroom or in the parish. First consideration is given to articles which provide theological perspectives on Lutheran education, explore issues specific to Lutheran education, or discuss the implications of recent educational developments for Lutheran education. Although each article need not address the interests of all members of the journal's broad audience, it is important that articles be written for the general reader rather than for a small body of specialists in a particular field. In general, articles should be aimed at a diverse but educated public.

Those wishing to submit an article for consideration should consult the guidelines posted on the *Lutheran Education* website at <http://www.curf.edu/~lejourn> or contact the editor directly by phone (708/209-3146), by e-mail ([crfbarzjm@curf.edu](mailto:crfbarzjm@curf.edu)) or by mail at the address listed on the masthead. Each manuscript received is reviewed by the editor and at least one associate editor before a decision is made regarding publication, rejection, or returning it to the author with suggestions for revisions.

## Can Charter Schools Accommodate Religious Programs?

*The Rev. Richard Zeile, M.A., M.Div., M.T.S., Sp.Ed., is Associate Pastor of Redford Evangelical Lutheran Church in Detroit. He served as principal at their G. A. Zurstadt Lutheran School until the decision was made to bring in a charter school in 1999. He also currently teaches science at George Crockett Academy in Detroit.*

As more states adopt the concept of the "charter school," some Lutheran Schools may consider the possibility of seeking charter status. The question, "Can charter schools accommodate religious programs?," is a timely one for parochial schools which have ceased to serve exclusively their sectarian community and have begun to serve the public at large. G. A. Zurstadt Lutheran School in Detroit and St. Mary Magdalene Catholic School of Melvindale, Michigan, are among those which have become "public school academies," taking advantage of the new charter school laws. The sponsoring parishes desired to preserve at least a remnant of their school ministry in the form of programs of religious instruction/exercise. The extent of accommodation under the law to such programs will be a key factor in other parishes' decisions regarding whether to seek charter school status.

This article explores the question in terms of Federal constitutional law, recognizing that state laws may prohibit accommodations permitted by Federal

courts. Federally allowed accommodations prohibited under state laws could serve as a separate topic for research. Although I refer to examples from Michigan, these will be broadly applicable in other states that have adopted the charter school concept.

### **Charter Schools Are Public Schools**

Excepting Arizona whose charter school law is unclear, every state that has charter school laws defines the charter school as a "public school." Michigan's Public Act 416 uses the term "public school academy" for the entity popularly referred to as "charter school." Such a

school is declared to be

a public school under section 2 of article VIII of the state constitution of 1963, and is considered a school district for the purposes of section 11 of article IX of the state constitution of 1963. A public school academy is a body corporate and is a governmental agency. The powers granted to a public school academy under this part constitute the performance of

essential public purposes and governmental functions of this state. [Section 501.(1)]

Since charter schools are clearly public schools, the question of accommodating religious programs is not a matter of "parochialism" or subsidizing sectarian education, no matter what the previous institutional character of the school or its community may have been. Boston Latin School and many of the nation's oldest public schools, from which America's tradition of common schooling sprang, were in origin sectarian, religious schools. Like these older sectarian-turned-public schools,

The question, "Can charter schools accommodate religious programs?" is a timely one for parochial schools which have ceased to serve exclusively their sectarian community and have begun to serve the public at large. The extent of accommodation under the law to such programs will be a key factor in other parishes' decisions regarding whether to seek charter school status.



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Michigan public school academies would have to sever any institutional connection with the religious community. Michigan's Public Act 416 states:

To the extent disqualified by state or federal constitution, a public school academy shall not be organized by a church or other religious organization and shall not have any organizational or contractual affiliation with or constitute a church or other religious organization. [Section 502.(1)]

Because charter schools in Michigan, as elsewhere, are public schools carrying out governmental functions, the body of federal law regarding public schools applies without exception to charter schools. Professor Jay Heubert (1997) of the Harvard Graduate School of Education studied the applicability of federal disability laws to charter schools and concluded that charter schools and their boards are subject to all the rules and procedures of federal disability law to which traditional public schools and school districts are bound (p. 303). He points out that no state charter can shield the public school academy from the federal requirements. In fact, the burden of meeting federal requirements—FAPE ("free, appropriate, public education"), "meaningful access" to unique public school programs, and responsibility for costs of implementing an IEP (individualized education plan)—may fall more heavily on the charter school. Unlike consolidated school districts, charter schools may not command the resources to meet federal mandates and achieve an economy of scale.

In summary, charter schools have no legal status that might allow them to accommodate religious programs prohibited to existing public schools.

### **Accommodation—Must Vs. May<sup>1</sup>**

The First Amendment of the Constitution contains two clauses respecting religion: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . . ." On the one hand, the Establishment Clause prohibits (through the Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause) state agents, including public school officials, from promoting religion; on the other hand, the Free Exercise Clause requires public school officials in some situations to accommodate the religious beliefs and practices of students. This "accommodation principle" was first articulated by Justice Douglas in his 1952 majority opinion in *Zorach v. Clauson* (343 U.S. 306, 313-314):

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<sup>1</sup>G. Sidney Buchanan (1981) sketched the "gray area" of public school accommodation of religion in an article for the *UCLA Law Review*, and I rely on his article for much of the following discussion.

When the state encourages religious instruction or cooperates with religious authorities by adjusting the schedule of public events to sectarian needs, it follows the best of our traditions. For it then respects the religious nature of our people and accommodates the public service to their spiritual needs. (Buchanan, 1981, p. 1000)

Instances of required accommodation are relatively few: Wisconsin v. Yoder, 406 U.S. 205 (1972) exempted an Amish boy from the state's requirement of formal education past the eighth grade only after close scrutiny of the Old Order Amish religious practices. Furthermore, in its understanding of free exercise of religion, the court makes a distinction between accommodation of belief versus that of practice:

Thus the [First] Amendment embraces two concepts—freedom to believe and freedom to act. The first is absolute but, in the nature of things, the second cannot be. Conduct remains subject to regulation for the protection of society. . . . In every case the power to regulate must be so exercised as not, in attaining a permissible end, unduly to infringe the protected freedom. (Cantwell v.

Connecticut, 310 U.S. 296, 303-304 [1940], from Buchanan, 1981, p. 1013) However, the line of permitted government accommodation of religion does extend beyond that of mandated accommodation. In the case of Walz v. Tax Commission, 397 U.S. 664 (1970), the Supreme Court upheld a New York statute that exempted property owned and used by an association organized exclusively for religious purposes. The Court stated:

The limits of permissible state accommodation to religion are by no means co-extensive with the non-interference mandated by the Free Exercise Clause. . . . We cannot read New York's statute as attempting to establish religion; it is simply sparing the exercise of religion from the burden of property taxation levied on private profit institutions. (Buchanan, 1981, p. 1030)

It should be noted that the court did not say that New York *must* exempt religiously owned property from tax, only that it *may*.

A standard used to distinguish instances of permissible from impermissible instances of accommodation is the so-called "Lemon" test. In Lemon v. Kurtzman 403 U.S. 602 (1971) the court established a tripartite test for determining whether a state action involves a violation of the Establishment Clause (Buchanan, 1981, p. 1027). The state action must: 1) have a secular purpose; 2) have the primary effect neither of advancing nor of inhibiting religion; and 3) avoid excessive government entanglement with religion; else the action in question will violate the Establishment Clause. This standard has come under recent criticism, notably by Anton Scalia in his dissent in Lamb's Chapel v. Center Moriches (508 U.S. 385 [1993]). While dissents

have no force of law, they may influence future legal thinking; at least one recent appellate court (*Gaylor v. United States*, U. S. Court of Appeals, Tenth Circuit, No. 95-1033 [1/23/96]) used an additional "endorsement test," a standard which asks "whether the 'reasonable observer' would view the practice as an endorsement."

### **Six Factors for Assessing Permissible Accommodation**

On the basis of *Lemon* and four major cases—*Abington School District v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963); *Engel v. Vitale*, U.S. 421 (1962), *Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306 (1952); and *Illinois ex rel. McCollum v. Board of Education*, 333 U.S. 203 (1948)—Buchanan identifies six factors which the courts will examine in determining if an accommodation is permissible under present constitutional law. (As with all Supreme Court decisions cited in this article, these were unmodified by subsequent courts and constitute valid law as of January 15, 1999).

The first is the "Disruption Factor." To what extent would accommodation disrupt the secular function of the charter school? In *McCollum* the court found too great a disruption in asking pupils not wishing religious instruction to leave the classroom; in *Zorach* the students leaving for religious instruction elsewhere was not found to be too disruptive (Buchanan, 1981, p. 1033).

The second factor is the "Constraint Factor." To what extent does accommodation constrain a student's freedom of choice concerning participation in the accommodated religious activity? In *Engel* the student's choice not to participate in the religious activity had to be exercised in front of peers and teachers; in *McCollum*, pupils could choose between study hall and the religious instruction. When the schedule is arranged so that pupils perceive the religious activity as the lesser of two evils, choice has been constrained.

The third factor Buchanan identifies is the "Financial Support Factor." To what extent does the government give financial support to that activity? This is a matter of degree, and to some extent, financial analysis. The Supreme Court has in recent decisions found that facilities use (*Lamb's Chapel v. Center Moriches Sch. Dist.*, 508 U.S. 385 [1993]) and Title I services (*Angostini et al. v. Felton* no. 96-552[1997]) may be allowed to religious organizations on the same basis as to other private organizations. Buchanan observes that the case for accommodation weakens as government grants to a religious activity financial support that is not granted to a non-religious activity similarly situated (Buchanan, 1981, p. 1037).

The fourth factor is the "Encouragement Factor." To what extent has government (including public school officials) encouraged the accommodated religious activity? Government initiated religious accommodation would run contrary to the

Establishment Clause; but a government stance of responsive permission would be viewed as a factor favoring accommodation (Buchanan, 1981, p. 1042).

Buchanan's fifth factor is the "Neutrality Factor," whether the school has remained ideologically neutral in relation to permissible activities. Recently, in *Lamb's Chapel v. Center Moriches*, 508 U.S. 385 (1993), Justice Kennedy in his concurring opinion observed

apparent unanimity of [the court's] conclusion that this overt, viewpoint-based discrimination contradicts the Speech Clause of the First Amendment . . .

Obviously, this cuts both ways; the school can neither favor (Justice Scalia's dissent, notwithstanding), nor disfavor, religion in pursuit of its secular mission.

The sixth factor is the "Student Age Factor." As the age of the student body approaches adulthood, a greater degree of accommodation is permissible. This is the reason substantially more government aid is permitted to sectarian colleges than to sectarian

secondary or grade schools. In *Roemer v. Board of Public Works*, 426 U.S. 736 (1976), Justice Blackmun wrote in the plurality opinion, "College students are less susceptible to religious indoctrination; college courses tend to entail an internal discipline that inherently limits the opportunities for sectarian influence. . . ." (Buchanan, 1981, p. 1045).

Any religious organization contemplating charter school status for its school will effectively surrender all formal control and influence over that school. It may be difficult for parishioners, alumni, and neighbors to accept, but the change to charter status may not preserve any of the religious elements hitherto part of that school's institutional life.

## **Implications for Parochial Schools Contemplating Charter Status**

It is clear that any religious organization contemplating charter school status for

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its school will, to be in compliance with Federal law, effectively surrender all formal control and influence over that school. In effect, the school (though not necessarily the building) will be "given up" to the state, if and when it achieves charter status. The gray area of accommodation does not extend as far as allowing constraint, encouragement, or endorsement (symbolic or otherwise), of any practice, instruction, or activity perceived as religious. It may be difficult for parishioners, alumni, and neighbors to accept, but the change to charter status (even if many students and personnel are held over in the same building) may not preserve any of the religious elements hitherto part of that school's institutional life. "Accommodation" can not, by definition, be school-initiated.

The parish or religious organization giving its school to the state (I use the expression "chartered school" for such) will have no legal means to promote religious programs in or through the school. However, there are at least three possible approaches to religious programming "along side" of the school. The religious organization may relate to the charter school as: 1) part of the constituency (pupils/families served); 2) proximate neighbor; or 3) landlord/donor.

A parish with many members attending a particular public school may persuade those members to request accommodation. Coaches may avoid scheduling games on Sundays; the calendar may schedule days off for Good Friday, Yom Kippur, or the annual parish picnic, if enough pupils will be absent anyway. Some form of release time for religious instruction may be accommodated; a "Bible club" might be permitted on the same basis as other clubs. Social mores favored by the dominant (parish) community might be tacitly adopted by the school community, or might at least influence decisions ranging from books displayed in the library to what elements of sex education are taught. It will be recognized that this strategy of influencing the community life of the charter school is the reverse of the parochial school mission; the parochial school is established to indoctrinate constituents while the charter school can only be influenced to accommodate the already indoctrinated constituents.

Apart from or in conjunction with the above, the church or parish may relate to the charter school as proximate neighbor. Presumably, the church or other buildings retained by the parish that shared the same campus could serve as sites for religious programs that meet during release time, or before or after school. Having visibility, convenience and, in the first few years, familiarity to school constituents, elements of the former religious program could be offered to the school in close proximity. The church may determine to address needs of the charter school community such as day-care, sports, scouting, or other enrichment programs that may draw constituents of the school voluntarily into activities which could include religious elements.

Churches in close proximity to regular public schools routinely attempt such programming.

A third possible way for the religious organization to relate to the charter school is as landlord/donor. As Heubert (1997) points out in his analysis of charter school obligations under federal disability law, charter schools face circumstances similar to many faced by small school districts (p. 320). Therefore, a recent decision of the Eighth Circuit Court, *Stark v. Independent School District*, No. 640, 123 F.3d 1068 (8th Cir. 1997), cert. denied, 118 S. Ct. 1560 (1998), (17), may have implications for charter schools. A public school that served the Brethren-dominated town of Vesta, Minnesota, was closed by its district. A member of the Brethren church purchased the building and eight years later offered to lease it back to the district for the reopening of the school, paying the maintenance of the premises while requesting that technology eschewed by Brethren belief—television, radio, video, and computer—not be used. Two taxpayers sued, arguing that this constituted a primary effect of promoting religion. The Eighth Circuit reversed (2-1) the District court's decision in favor of the plaintiffs. Applying the *Lemon* test, the Eighth Circuit found the Vesta arrangement did not advance religion in accommodating the subsidizer's request. The trend toward corporate sponsorship of school activities, notably "Channel One" (students see educational broadcasts and required commercial advertisements), raises new issues. What values, products, and practices may be represented, endorsed, or encouraged in public schools, and what accommodations may be permitted to religion, to organizations affiliated with a religious viewpoint, and to individuals who may happen to hold religious convictions?

In Michigan, the charter school law may be construed to prohibit the direct rental of facilities to a charter school, but the same object is being accomplished by the leasing of the building to a management company like the Leona Group of Lansing, Michigan, which sublets these facilities to the charter school. Such arrangements are already in use at Detroit's Voyageur Academy, managed by the Leona Group using the former Zion Lutheran School, and at Old Redford Academy, managed by Innovative Teaching Solutions using the former G. A. Zurstadt Lutheran School. However, while the religious organization may remain owner of the building, and may even succeed in having certain conditions put into the lease agreement, impositions perceived as religious will be open to challenge in court.

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"If a doctor, lawyer or dentist had 40 people in his office at one time, all of whom had different needs, and some of whom didn't want to be there and were causing trouble, and the doctor, lawyer or dentist, without assistance, had to treat them all with professional excellence for nine months, then he might have some concept of a classroom teacher's job."

Donald D. Quinn

## Successful Ministry

Using the word "success" seems inappropriate when assessing the ministry of principals. The things that matter most in a principal's ministry are intangible. While a salesman's performance can be judged on the basis of sales and a factory worker's performance can be judged on the basis of production, the meaningful things a principal does cannot be so easily evaluated. There are, however, some characteristics that point toward success in the ministry of a principal.

The ministry of a successful principal is filled with acts of compassion. He realizes that his mission isn't to administer a school; it's to minister to people. Successful principals are willing to be taken advantage of if it might result in helping people. The needs of others are a priority.

A successful principal interprets his role as that of a servant. He seeks to serve, not to be served. Success comes in humility. "The greatest in the Kingdom of heaven is the one who humbles himself," Jesus reminds us. The successful principal recognizes the source of his accomplishments. He realizes that God is the wind beneath his wings, and without Him he is in for a rough landing.

The successful principal realizes that he is the set-up man. His job is to put teachers and students in the best possible position to achieve. A successful ministry is highlighted by glimpses of the accomplishments of the students and teachers within the school.

A principal who is successful in ministry works through discouragement. He knows there will be many disappointments, but he keeps working in the knowledge that his efforts will make a difference. It's been said that life is like licking honey off a thorn. A lot of pain needs to be endured to get a little bit of sweetness, but successful principals are willing to make that tradeoff. "A minute's success pays for the failure of years," noted the poet Robert Browning.

Principals engaged in successful ministry understand that the quest for success is ongoing. It's a journey, not a destination. Athletes often say, "You're only as good as your last game." Principals understand ministry in the same vein. The songwriter Irving Berlin once said, "The toughest thing about success is that you have to keep being successful." The plight of a principal is a bit like that of the mythological Sisyphus who was forced to roll a huge stone to the top of a hill. Each time he neared the summit, the stone pushed him back to the bottom of the hill. Principals keep climbing, knowing that the goal of their ministry isn't to get

to the top of the educational hill but to help the people along the way walk closer to the Lord.

A principal in a successful ministry doesn't abandon the attitudes and commitments he had that brought about initial achievements. He doesn't become too big for his job. Ben Franklin once commented, "Success has ruined many a man." Allowing success to go to one's head is unfortunate in any profession, but it's tragic in ministry.

Successful principals have the desire to keep learning. They learn from their mistakes. They learn from their successes. They learn from their students. They learn from their teachers. They keep on learning.

The successful principal notes the faults of the Pharisees and avoids the stifling legalism that gets in the way of the Gospel's message. A successful principal knows the policies of the school and enforces them, but he also knows when and how to go beyond mere enforcement of the rules for a student. He realizes that policies aren't designed to be an end in themselves and that the policy that supersedes all others is that of God's love for children.

Successful principals also realize that concern for a child's ultimate welfare sometimes means allowing the child to see the negative consequences that come with making wrong decisions. Successful principals love children enough to discipline them.

Successful ministry is characterized by attempts to do the best one can with a given situation. A successful principal plays the hand he has been dealt and does his best. High achievement test scores and enrollments aren't necessarily marks of successful ministry. "Success is to be measured not so much by the position one has reached in life as by the obstacles he has overcome while trying to succeed," Booker T. Washington observed.

Successful principals are consistent role models. They know that years hence, students will remember what they saw in their principal far better than what they heard him say.

Lastly, and most importantly, the mark of successful ministry for a principal is faithfulness. A successful principal is faithful to his God. Mother Theresa nailed it when she said, "God doesn't demand that we be successful; He simply asks that we be faithful." ✠

## Receiving Care From Those We Are Called To Serve

Growing up, we are taught "it is more blessed to give than to receive." No wonder receiving care from others is difficult, especially for adults. Multiply that difficulty by ten, and we have an idea of the difficulty many church professionals have with receiving care from those they are called to serve. We often become so focused on serving others that we unintentionally create barriers which communicate *independence* rather than *interdependence*. As you are blessed with opportunities to receive care from those who serve at your side, consider what it means to live the liturgical life together.

### Our Liturgical Life

Receiving all good gifts from our Heavenly Father is what Harold Senkbeil (1994) refers to as our "Liturgical Life Together." Christ lives in us and serves us through His church. Senkbeil reminds us that liturgical life is God's divine service which "removes the walls we erect around ourselves and the wedges others seek to drive between us and our brothers and sisters." When God calls us to gather around His living Word and Sacraments, He pours out His gifts of righteousness and the forgiveness of sins. By living out our new life in Christ, we give and receive His peace within our whole lives—from the mountain tops of joy, to the valleys of sorrow. God's good gifts come full circle in us and through us, His church. Paul captured it well when he wrote to the Galatians: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Christ, living in us, enables us to connect with others and support one another. Our heavenly Father calls us into a relationship with Him and with fellow believers.

### Healthy Boundaries

As we support one another, we must remember that healthy physical and emotional boundaries are essential to giving and receiving care from others. Care from congregational members needs to happen with "safe" people, those whom we can trust with our vulnerabilities. Seek out caregivers who are able to keep confidences, and foster friendships with those who can overlook

flaws. People who provide the opportunity for us to live as authentic brothers and sisters in Christ are to be treasured. Although letting others into our brokenness can feel risky, our liturgical life connects us to the body of Christ and to His perfect healing and forgiveness. God designed the body, His church, to care for one another. "Now the body is not made up of one part but of many . . . But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be . . . so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other" (1 Cor. 12: 14, 18, 25). Delivery from sin, death, and the devil, as Luther's Catechism reminds us, is the work of Christ. It's a completed work lived out in this liturgical life in the midst of the ordinary and even messy reality of our world. Kathleen Norris (1998) calls this "detachment." Contrary to today's negative connotation, Norris writes of the monastic interpretation that means allowing neither worldly values nor self-centeredness to distract us from what is essential in our relationship with God, and with each other." This sort of detachment is neither passive nor remote but, paradoxically, is fully engaged with the world. It is not resignation but a vigilance that allows a person to recognize that whatever comes is a gift from God. It does not mean "being above it all" but recognizes that one shares in a common human lot.

Church workers are not exempt from the body or on a higher level than others. Servants of the Lord need healing from time to time. However, it isn't realistic to expect the same level of intimacy with all members of our congregation and staff. As "parts of the body," we are connected more closely to certain "parts of the body" than to others. Just as we aren't always going to be the one who serves everyone, we won't always be served by everyone either—and that's okay.

## **Receiving Is Risky**

Receiving care from others is risky. We will be disappointed, possibly even hurt, by the inappropriate actions of those who give us care, but we will also be blessed with unexpected grace and acceptance as well. One of the best ways to avoid awkwardness and hurt is to be specific in telling others what we need from them. A statement such as, "I really don't want any advice, I just want someone to sit with me," gives people permission to simply listen rather than trying to "fix" us. At times, we may not be able to tell others what we need, but we can rest assured that God who calls us into this liturgical life knows the desires of our heart. However, when the inevitable occurs, as sinful people care for sinful people, we are called to be "little sacraments," receiving and giving God's forgiveness.

God's good gifts continue to find us in all circumstances as we are being brought to a place of humility. Anne Lammott (1999) shares a story, told by her pastor, about a lost little girl who was riding around in a patrol car, trying to identify her home. The officers were concerned about the place where she told them to stop. She said,

"Don't worry, it's my church and I can always find my way home from church."

Receiving care from those we are called to serve can help us in finding our way back home again.

As professional church workers, we are called to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ. Just as certainly, we are also called to be served by them. One might expect that over time we would become more comfortable receiving care from others, but instead we often feel embarrassed by needing someone's help again. But even in times of embarrassment, our hope and peace continue to rest on Christ who calls us to serve and to be served by Him. Operating out of our comfort zone can produce an abundance of blessings, especially when we open ourselves to receive care from others. Receiving care from those whom you are called to serve doesn't always come naturally, but remember that blessings from God aren't "either/or" propositions like the notion of whether it is more blessed to give than to receive. In God's divine service, our liturgical life together, it is a blessing both "to give and to receive."

*"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" (Eph. 3:20-21).✠*

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"Every time you meet another human being you have the opportunity. It's a chance at holiness. For you will do one of two things, then. Either you will build him up, or you will tear him down. Either you will acknowledge that he *is*, or you will make him sorry that he is—sorry, at least, that he is *there*, in front of you. You will create, or you will destroy. And the things you dignify or deny are God's property. They are made, each of them, in His own image."

Walt Wangerin, Jr., *Ragman and Other Cries of Faith*



## Words About Music for Young Readers

Parents and teachers have a growing number of quality choices for children's books about music these days. Both fiction and non-fiction texts with beautiful illustrations are readily available to use both for individual readers and as read-alouds. The following are just a few examples of what is available for children in pre-kindergarten through fourth grade.

Yuko Takao. (1997). *A Winter Concert*. Brookfield, CT: Millbrook.

The author is an artist who shares with her readers experiences she had as a result of attending a concert. This book, the smallest and shortest in this grouping, has the most profound message, both written and visual, about music's effects on humans and their environment. The story begins with line drawing illustrations in black and white. Once the concert begins, the music transforms the listeners and colors their experience long after the music itself is over. This wonderful artistic depiction of the writer's aesthetic experience lends itself well as a springboard for full class discussion about the magic of music.

John Lithgow. (2000). *The Remarkable Farkle McBride*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

When he's not on the set of *Third Rock from the Sun*, Lithgow spends much of his time listening to orchestras and writing children's books and songs. Farkle McBride is a memorable character, a child prodigy of sorts. He practices his way through the orchestra, learning an instrument from each family. While his playing is skilled and gifted beyond his years, Farkle bores quickly and moves on to his next selection in each family, having had little satisfaction with the last. The story concludes in grandeur with the discovery of Farkle's true musical love. The tale unfolds in a rhyming style reminiscent of Dr. Seuss. The illustrations are clever cartoonings of members of the Cincinnati Symphony that add a whimsical perspective to the rhyme. If you haven't yet added Lithgow's children's CD *Singing in the Bathtub* to your collection, you should find a copy of that as well.

Toyomi Igus. (1998). *I See the Rhythm*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

This book, a Coretta Scott King Award winner (due in large part to Michele Wood's incredible paintings that illustrate the text), traces the evolution of African American music from the early 1500's to present day. The text is really two differing texts running parallel throughout the book. On each page, one aspect covers

## Educating the Whole Child by Jean Harrison

important dates and style changes, giving exceptional detail that will capture readers of any age. Alongside that is poetic text describing the rhythmic feel of the music and noting the contributions of the most dominant performers of each style. The paintings throughout add to the emotion and soul of this book which should be read and used certainly during Black History Month but deserves revisiting throughout the year. A must for any fine arts teacher's collection, it also makes a meaningful gift for anyone of any age who loves jazz, blues, soul, gospel, and spirituals.

Isaac Millman. (1998). *Moses Goes to a Concert*. New York: Frances Foster Books/Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Moses and his friends are deaf children. There are several books in this series by Millman that tell of this special classroom, their teacher Mr. Samuels, and all sorts of activities and adventures they experience as they learn together. This is another book that functions on several levels as the story is told both in written English and in American Sign Language on each page. In this book the children attend a concert and meet up with the featured performer, Evelyn Glennie, a professional percussionist who is also hearing impaired. The reader learns how these deaf children "hear" a concert and how anyone, regardless of physical challenge, can experience and perform music. The book includes a section about sign language and diagrams for children to learn many of the signs for words used in the story.

Scholastic Voyages of Discovery. (1994). *Musical Instruments: From Flutes Carved of Bone, to Lutes, to Modern Electric Guitars*. New York: Scholastic.

While a relatively short volume for its scope, this book covers the history of musical instruments throughout the world with an informative and creative presentation. Readers move through time opening doors and windows to reveal various instruments, use transparent overlays to learn how instruments have evolved, add stickers to an instrument maker's workshop to fill the shelves, and even open the lid of the grand piano to see the mechanisms inside. There are maps to help children locate the areas of the world where different featured ethnic instruments originated, detailed illustrations to help the reader visualize the various stages of assembling a violin, a seating chart for the symphony, and even a recording session in progress that children can peek into. About the only thing this book doesn't provide are the sounds connected to each of the instruments.

Langston Hughes. (1954, reprinted 1995). *The Book of Rhythms*. New York: Oxford.

Music teachers and their students are fortunate that this book has been revived. An introduction by Wynton Marsalis has been added to the latest edition. Hughes's unique poetic style takes the reader along on an exploration into nearly every possible aspect of rhythm. There are discoveries made as rhythm is found in nature, music, machines, and daily life. Rhythm is all around us: it is the force that turns sound into music. Rhythm is the "feel" of music and the feel of life. Hughes allows children to realize rhythm's effect on the listener and encourages children to be rhythm creators as well. ♪

## To Be (Certified), or Not to Be?

Two anxious parents met for the first time with the principal of their son's new Lutheran school. After the usual introductory comments by the administrator and the typical parental inquiries about class size, student teacher ratio, curriculum, and extracurricular activities, the articulate parents got right to the point of their reason for meeting: "How do we know that our son is being taught by the best qualified instructors? How do they compare to their public school counterparts? What measures are taken to make sure that teachers 'keep up' with changes in education and society? How can we be certain that our son is learning what he is 'supposed' to know?"

It is fortunate that the principal of this school understands the value of qualified staff and certification. She explained to the parents that all full-time teachers (and the administrator!) possess current certification for their respective teaching areas from the state in which the school resides. To qualify for the required re-certification, all teachers develop and implement a professional development plan which is coordinated through the principal. The school requires educators to complete a Master's degree program. The school also expects all staff members to meet the certification requirements of the affiliated church body and to be active members of Lutheran Education Association.

With some additional discussion, the parents were happy to discover that all professional educators in their son's new Lutheran school were well qualified to teach their son. What made their qualifications easy to recognize? When teachers have met the requirements of teacher preparation programs, state standards, and church body and national guidelines—and have similarly committed to ongoing professional development, especially in their unique areas of ministry—parents can be assured of the best education for their son or daughter. That's the value of *certification*. It ensures some degree of standardization and continuity at various levels that are commonly accepted by professionals and society. Certification provides accountability and measures the level of quality. It increases professional credibility and enhances ministry in Lutheran schools and congregations.

There has been much debate in recent years about the issue of certification. Critics site inconsistent implementation and a

**Today's Lutheran Educator**  
*by Jonathan Laabs, Executive Director of the Lutheran Education Association*

pressing need for more teachers as reasons for reform. Quality control is being challenged at both the undergraduate and state certification levels. For instance, though 41 states require prospective teachers to pass licensure tests before entering the classroom, only 14 have tests that go beyond multiple choice to essay and other performance tasks. However, in the past two years there has been increasing activity in most of the 45 states that require re-certification to increase their expectations and move toward a system of required professional development plans.

Colleges and universities are facing new challenges every day in preparing young people for careers in education. Emerging national standards and constantly changing state guidelines make it difficult for programs to meet expectations for certification in every state. The teacher who moves from one state to another especially feels pressure to meet such requirements. Though the vast majority (70%) of new teachers across the country have indicated that teacher training programs did a good or excellent job of making sure they knew how to teach effectively, they also cited certain weaker areas:

- making sure teachers can deal with the pressure and stress of teaching;
- making sure teachers know how to maintain student discipline;
- making sure teachers have enough teaching experience in front of real classrooms.

Both undergraduate and graduate education programs at Lutheran institutions such as the Concordias and Valparaiso are essential in preparing professional Lutheran educators to become competent, committed, and credentialed for what they do. A strong pre-service foundation leads to ongoing professional development. Meeting all requirements of the profession while in the field is equally important. Collaboration among higher education institutions, state education agencies, and professional educators to effect positive, productive recognition of teacher qualifications and development of standards must be nourished.

Teacher certification has been receiving new recognition at the national level. The Carnegie Corporation helped launch the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards which, over the past decade, has built a voluntary system for certifying outstanding teachers through a series of performance assessments based on teachers' work. With more than 5000 teachers already recognized (including Lutheran educators!), the goal is to certify 100,000 teachers by the year 2006. Similar recognition of *all* qualified Lutheran teachers and administrators needs to be explored and supported. Quality teaching is not limited to educators in public schools, particular grade levels, or specific parts of the country. Standards for quality must be established, accepted, and encouraged at all levels of Lutheran education. Educators who meet those standards must be recognized and encouraged to continue their professional development. Parents should expect nothing less. Lutheran schools and congregations must rise to the challenge and chart a new course for certifying Lutheran education professionals.†

## Encourage, Encourage, Encourage—and Again I Say, “Encourage!”

Remember the story of the little boy who was trying out for the school play? He was so excited about getting a part. His folks were concerned that he not be too disappointed if he did not get the part he wanted. So when he came home they quickly asked him what happened at rehearsal. The boy was ecstatic! He told them joyfully that his teacher had selected him to sit in the audience and clap and applaud loudly!

And that's the role of the Lutheran educator! We have been called to “clap and applaud loudly” for those whom the Lord has put around us. It's called *encouragement*!

The Scriptures are full of encouraging words, certainly beginning at the cross and the resurrection which focuses us on God's promise of always loving, forgiving, and encouraging us in Christ. Check out Saint Paul's writings, where he constantly encourages God's people to build each other up in the faith: “Encourage one another and build each other up . . .” (1 Thess. 5:11:).

Encouragement is “from the heart.” It is certainly not merely saying nice words in trite phrases to people in general. To be most effective, encouragement needs to be specific, intentional, and focused on specific actions and reactions.

Eric Harvey has put out a booklet entitled *180 Ways to Walk the Recognition Talk*. It lists, you guessed it, 180 ways to encourage people! And it only begins to touch the surface of how we can live a life of encouragement!

Here is a list of a number of specific ways that I have tried to encourage people and people have tried to encourage me. Why not make your own list and develop a list of “encouraging ways” at a future staff meeting or family devotion? Perhaps you can begin by asking “How have you been encouraged recently?” and “How have you encouraged others recently?”

Here goes:

1. Send birthday cards, anniversary cards, and “Hello, how are you?” cards to persons each week. Use your Christmas card list, your church or school directory, or even try your city's phone book?!
2. Make a quick phone call or send a quick e-mail to a person you know who has just been promoted or changed jobs or had a new grandson or is mourning the death of a mother.



## *Multiplying Ministries*

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3. Keep your prayer list growing by praying for those with whom you come in contact through the week.
4. Encourage people by simply asking them questions like, "What was the best part of your day today?" Or, "What was something that happened today that you would rather forget about?" To take the time to ask, and then to listen, is a great affirmation of others and a great way to encourage the saints around you.
5. Be bold to ask family members, staff persons, students, and others how they want to be encouraged and recognized. It is helpful to ask a question like, "What is the best way for me to encourage you in what you are about?"
6. Be accessible! Make time for people to be able to spend time with you. It's a great way to encourage, a great way to get to know people better, and a great way for them to get to know you also. And I bet you will be encouraged in the process!
7. Celebrate successes! When people are honored, when they do a super job, when something special happens in their life, celebrate! Bake a cake, bring in the balloons, sing "Praise the Lord," and take time to celebrate the experience, the honor, and the moment!
8. Get in the habit of catching people doing "great things!" Write it in your daily calendar that you plan to "catch" at least one person doing something good each day—and then praise her for it!
9. Recognize and encourage a family member or staff person by giving him his own day! Recognize special people by declaring a future day as "their" day, or hour, or week! Celebrating "Matt Cillick Day" because of his fine job at the band concert last week is a very specific, fun, and worthwhile way to recognize and encourage all the Matts around you.
10. Encourage people by doing something for them, like showing up at their child's soccer game. Encouragement is not just words; encouragement is also living out those words and actions. The best way to encourage a mother and father might be to watch their kids so they can go out alone for a movie and dinner.

Why not make your own "Top 10" list of ways to encourage people? I will guarantee that in so doing, you will also be encouraged. One way to receive encouragement is to encourage other people. Watch out, it's contagious!

Perhaps we should all paraphrase that old song and sing, "where *often* is heard an *encouraging* word." Do not leave it to the deer and the antelope. Do it today—and often!

And again I say, "Encourage!"✠



## **"Lutheran Schools Care a Lot": What Does This Mean?**

By now, we are all probably familiar with the bumper sticker, "Lutheran schools care a lot." Most of our schools have probably created promotional literature using student quotes that say something like, "The teachers care." But what do we care about? Or, to ask the question of all Lutheran questions, "What does this mean?"

"Care" is an interesting word. My favorite theological handbook, *Webster's Dictionary*, takes us back to Old English and connects the idea with "sorrow" or "to cry out or to scream," hence the German *karfreitag* (Good Friday). I now can see some eyebrows rising in that "Aha!" expression. Whatever the word means, we know the man who cared on Good Friday cared a lot!

We teaching ministers care about many things: our classroom environment, student learning, subject matter, and extracurricular excellence. Sometimes our flesh elevates these concerns to top priority. But they are not number one.

Theologian Karl Barth, asked what was the most profound truth, replied, "Jesus loves me." Whoever has experienced a dark night of the soul has wondered, "Does God care about *me*?" Let there be no mistake: we are surrounded by many teens, parents, and colleagues who are desperately crying out this question.

Therefore, our classrooms, sports, and activities happen to be means to an end. They are vehicles that move us toward our destination. So where are we headed? What is our ultimate goal? We hope that all who cross our path taste, see, and smell through us the truth that God, indeed, cares very much for them.

Webster's continues: "to feel concern or interest; to feel love or a liking; to look after; to provide for."

To care means to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. It means to laugh and to cry with another. Since we have suffered and been tempted, we can easily relate to those who suffer and are tempted. Since we have questioned and wondered, we can easily relate to those who question and wonder.

To care means to get involved with another. We in the church often speak of having "a ministry of presence." We are present with students inside and outside class, at lunch and at games. We serve with them and worship with them. We share passions and projects, programs and procedures. We ask

## *Secondary Sequence*

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questions and listen to answers. Paul says it so well in 1 Thessalonians 2:8: "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us." So we tactfully and appropriately share our struggles and our joys. We share our Friday nights watching the athletes, musicians, or actors.

To care means to give what is needed to the other. We spank with the Law and hug with the Gospel. We rebuke and we praise. We competently teach and coach and advise. We give ears and wisdom, tears and silence. We give skills and knowledge. We share God's Word and we dispense grace. We seek justice and show mercy. We point to His promises and remind of His deeds.

We give everything, yet we give nothing. We succeed splendidly, yet fail miserably. "[We] will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through [us]" (Rom. 15:18). "[We] have been crucified with Christ and [we] no longer live, but Christ lives in [us]" (Gal. 2:20).

Our prayer is that of Paul in Ephesians 3:17-19, that all in our school community "may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge."

What does it mean that Lutheran schools care a lot? It means laying down our lives and dying. It means praying for His will, not our will, to be done. It means—first, last, and always—Jesus. We care because He first cared for us. We care because He cares *through* us. Do we wish to increase our care for others? Then let us first look and see how great His care is for us. And let us cling to His promise: "I will cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:25-26). Such a heart will feel and cry out; it will bleed; it will care.

What does it mean that Lutheran schools care a lot? Perhaps another bumper sticker answers the question most succinctly: "Lutheran schools share Christ."†

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"If I had a child who wanted to be a teacher, I would bid him Godspeed as if he were going to war. For indeed the war against prejudice, greed, and ignorance is eternal, and those who dedicate themselves to it give their lives no less because they may live to see some fraction of the battle won."

James Hilton

## The Fear of the Lord

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Do you remember memorizing this as a child? Perhaps it is more familiar as "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," as it is in the King James Version of the Bible.

But how many of you know (without looking!) what comes next? I know that I did not. I memorized only the first half of Proverbs 1:7. The writer of the Proverbs goes on, however, to tell us that "fools despise wisdom and discipline." I suspect that we don't usually ask children to memorize the second half of this verse because it seems to contain contradictions. Can we really put wisdom and discipline in the same clause? Just how do we think of them as parallel?

To answer that question, let's take a look at Psalm 94:12. Here we read "Blessed is the man you discipline, O Lord, the man you teach from your law." Now it's getting really confusing, isn't it? Discipline makes us blessed? We all know that discipline is good for us. But *blessed*?

### The Beginning of Knowledge

When does knowledge begin? If you were paying attention as you were reading the description of brain development in the winter issue of *Lutheran Education*, you know that it begins way back at the beginning—even before birth! That may not be our traditional way of thinking about knowledge, but it's still true. The author of Proverbs, however, tells us that "the fear of the Lord" is the beginning of real knowledge. Hmmm. So maybe knowledge is different from brain functioning.

Just what do we mean by "the fear of the Lord?" We know that it doesn't mean being fearful or afraid. There are "fear nots" peppered throughout the Bible! What this phrase really describes is a loving reverence for God, for the Lord. It also includes a submission to His lordship and a belief in His promises. That's the kind of fear that is the foundation of knowledge and wisdom.

How does that beginning of knowledge start in your classroom? Are you teaching your children to be truly wise? What does this look like for young children? Don't they have to be able to think logically first?

The fear of the Lord begins when you lead your children to love God, to regard Him lovingly and reverently. It continues as you encourage children to believe His promises and to regard Him as Lord over all they do. I do not believe that children have to be able to think logically before they can appreciate the wisdom of God. I believe that young children are more ready to embrace wisdom than adults at times. In fact, Jesus told His

Teaching the Young  
by Shirley K. Morgenthaler

disciples that very thing when He placed a little child in their midst and told them that this child was to be their model of greatness.

## **Discipline and Blessedness**

Ok, so young children can be wise. They can fear the Lord. But discipline and blessedness? Have I flipped completely? No, I don't think so. Not if we turn back to Psalm 94:12. "Blessed is the man you discipline," the psalmist writes.

One of the challenges for educators today is that the definition of discipline has narrowed into the negative. We have difficulty thinking of discipline as a two-sided concept that includes the positive as well as the negative. The culture has so brainwashed most people that the word has an almost totally negative connotation.

Discipline is discipling. There is little difference. The two words have the same root from the Latin: *Dis* = away from; *Capere* = to seize. Both discipline and discipling describe the process of leading or seizing someone away from a former action, a former belief. Both of them include the idea of guiding in the preferred or correct path. And getting on the correct path is truly a blessed thing!

## **Bedrocks of Blessedness**

Now what about your classroom? Is it a bedrock of blessedness? Does the discipline you practice and demonstrate lead to blessedness? To wisdom? This, to me, is the most awesome responsibility we have. Our discipline *needs* to lead to wisdom, or we have missed the mark.

Everything we do needs to be surrounded with the fear—the loving reverence—of the Lord so that the children in our care catch that fear, that loving reverence. We are, you know, role models for the relationships with God to which the children in our care and tutelage will aspire.

## **Learning from Life**

In my first year of teaching, more than forty years ago now, I was given a poem by a friend. Just who gave me that poem is long forgotten, but the poem itself is etched in my memory and into my heart forever. Let me share it with you:

We are writing the Gospel, a chapter a day

By the things that we do and the words that we say.

Children read what we write, whether faithless or true.

So, what is the Gospel according to *you*?

The children in most early childhood classrooms are preliterate. The only words they are reading are the words of your life. Are they reading about the fear of the Lord? Are they comprehending wisdom? Is your life writing about blessedness in a way they can read? Just what *is* the Gospel according to your life with the children in your care?†

**Angus J. L. Menuge, Ed. (1999). *Christ and Culture in Dialogue: Constructive Themes and Practical Applications*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House.**

Christians who lived in under the Third Reich were confronted with a Nazi government intent on eradicating the Jewish people, euthanizing the handicapped, sterilizing the 'hereditarily criminal,' not to mention reducing 'non-Nordics' to perpetual servitude. Unavoidably, these Christians were compelled to decide what to make of their government's goals. Many capitulated unreservedly. For example, many so-called 'German Christians' were willing to modify their theological convictions to better fit the prevailing anti-Semitic ethos: some denied that Jesus Christ was Jewish, denied that baptism was efficacious for Jews, or reconstructed their characterization of Jesus Christ—from "a cowardly sufferer" to "a fighting Christ"—to render it attractive to Storm Troopers (Herschel, 1999; cf. Bergen, 1996). Many, no doubt, harbored qualms about Nazi practices but believed that resistance to God's divinely appointed authorities was morally forbidden. Still others believed that faithfulness to God required them to resist the Nazis: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and many members of the Kreisau Circle actively participated in the July 1944 assassination attempt on Hitler (and were murdered as a direct consequence).

The condition of Christians living under the Third Reich raises in extreme and perspicuous fashion a question that every Christian must answer: how ought she relate her theological convictions to the commitments that hold sway in her cultural environment? If the moral norms shared by her compatriots are deeply anti-Semitic, how does the Christian respond? If the medical community concurs that invalids are merely "ballast existences," should she attempt to alter that consensus to render it consistent with the Christian commitment to the fundamental inviolability of each person? (Burleigh, 2001). Presumably, for each Christian, wherever and whenever situated, some theological commitments conflict with the commitments that hold sway in her social environment. What to do? Withdraw into a Christian enclave? Find some way to iron out the conflict, as with the German Christians? Try to change the dominant culture—to convert that culture, so to speak? Articulate the conflict, but do nothing? Affirm, perhaps paradoxically, both the truth of Christian convictions *and* those that hold sway in the dominant

culture?

Much contemporary discussion of such questions begins with H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* (1951). In *Christ and Culture*, Niebuhr identifies various ways for a Christian to approach her cultural environment. Those who adopt the *Christ Against Culture* approach hold that, as a general matter, Christians should extricate themselves as best they can from the dominant culture—which is, after all, deeply and unavoidably sinful—in order to establish Christian enclaves as free as possible from the taint of sin. (Perhaps Anabaptists, such as the Amish, fit this characterization.) Those who adopt the *Christ of Culture* approach take the position that, in general, the prevailing mores and settled convictions of the dominant culture should be used as a basis for evaluating Christian commitments such that, in case of conflict, Christian commitments should be refashioned to alleviate conflict. (Think Thomas Jefferson, Locke, Schleiermacher, and, alas, the German Christians.)

The *Christ against Culture* and *Christ of Culture* approaches are somewhat extreme, but Niebuhr kindly offers us several more moderate alternatives. Two are of particular interest. The *Christ transforming Culture* position, associated with Reformed Christianity, asserts that the Christian has an obligation to reform culture so as to render it consistent with God's will. It advocates a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to personal and public action: just as the Christian, relying on God's grace, ought to do what is within her power both to resist sin and to form a God-pleasing character, so also ought she do what is within her power, again relying on God's grace, both to overcome sin in the interpersonal realm of politics, culture, the economy, etc. and to form God pleasing political institutions, economic practices, etc.

Finally, the *Christ and culture in paradox* approach, identified with Lutheranism, insists that the Christian has an obligation to be fully engaged in the political, legal, economic, and cultural affairs of her day, but ought to do so in a manner that differs markedly from the way she serves God in her personal life. As regards her relationship to God, the Christian realizes that she is, though ineluctably sinful, nevertheless assured of God's unmerited forgiveness. And the values of grace and forgiveness govern her face to face relations to others: when sinned against, she forgives; when attacked, she does not defend; when injusticed, she does not demand restitution, etc. But she ought not import such values into the political, legal, economic, and cultural realm: when engaged in those spheres of activity, she employs the Law, not the Gospel, to determine how political institutions ought to be structured, economic practices altered, cultural life reformed, etc. So the Lutheran, like the Reformed, regards God as the Lord of all of life, and so takes the Christian to have an obligation to serve God in everything she does, but the Lutheran wants the Christian to distinguish between two spheres of life and to employ very different normative standards for determining how she ought to act in those spheres.

The Lutheran position has received quite a lot of bad press, and Angus Menuge, the editor of *Christ and Culture in Dialogue*, as well as most of the contributors to



that edited volume, set out to resuscitate it. Most of the contributors are Lutheran—indeed, most teach at the same Missouri-Synod Lutheran institution (Concordia Wisconsin)—but they don't intend to speak only to Lutherans, much less Lutherans of the Missouri flavor. Throughout the volume, the contributors attempt—with considerable success—to engage both Christians of other theological persuasions and secular academics. I can't in this brief review lay out the arguments of each essay, but I will articulate what seems a set of common concerns woven through many of the submissions.

In what respects, according to the contributors, do critics find the Lutheran position wanting? The dualism of the Lutheran position is supposed to lend itself to "a quietist cultural conservatism" (Menuge, p. 46; see also, Benne, pp. 112-13). Christians are to resist sin and reform character in the personal sphere, but can pretty much let things take their course in law, politics, or culture—as all too many Lutherans did under the Nazis. But this criticism mistakes a particular kind of social activism with an unwillingness to engage in social activism at all: although the Lutheran position discourages "direct action of the church . . . the Lutheran church strongly affirms indirect influence of culture via the activity of church members pursuing their secular vocations" (Menuge, p. 47). Each Christian ought to engage in her secular vocation, whether as a policeman, politician, or academic in such a way that her life "constitute[s] a protest statement against worldly corruption and idolatry" (Menuge, p. 47). Many of the contributors emphasize that a proper understanding of the Lutheran position—the so-called two kingdoms doctrine in particular—does not encourage passivity with respect to the existing social order or a wholesale privatization of religious commitment; rather, it enjoins citizens to engage in the reformation of society and culture. Thus Veith:

Recognizing God's double sovereignty over all of life can enable Christians to be engaged with their culture in a positive, transforming way, without succumbing to the deadly, spirit-quenching sin of worldliness. Christians are called to be both faithful and relevant; active in service to the world, yet having their minds fixed on 'things that are above' (Colossians 3:1); open to culture—and secular education and to the secular world in general—yet looking at culture and the secular realm with critical eyes. (p. 143; see also, for example, Kolb, pp. 115-16; Benne, p. 325)

As I see the matter, this emphasis is entirely wholesome. Powerful forces in modernity impel Christians to privatize their religious convictions. Political philosopher Richard Rorty (1994), for example, has suggested that we should aspire to make "it seem bad taste to bring religion into discussions of public policy" (3). The culture and ideology of many of the graduate institutions in which Christian academics are molded discourage them from employing their religious commitments as a resource in theory construction and evaluation: the value of neutrality many graduate students are socialized into militates against the use of theological

commitments to evaluate scientific theories, metaphysical claims, and the like. (And vice versa, of course.) Moreover, many Lutherans, it seems, employ a desiccated and ossified understanding of the two kingdoms doctrine, veiled in baroque affirmations of 'paradox,' to legitimate their willingness to privatize their religious commitments and to participate in the cult of neutrality. Given how easily the Lutheran position can be used to rationalize culturally predominant mores about how to engage in political and academic discourse, *Christ and Culture in Dialogue* is a more than welcome effort: it will speak to Lutherans in their native tongue in order to communicate the need for a mass exodus from an overpopulated and self-imposed ghetto.

There is more to be said on this point, however: I detect signs of a somewhat alien sensibility lurking between the lines of *Christ and Culture in Dialogue*. Simply put, the dominant thrust of the book reads—*feels*—at least as much Reformed as it does Lutheran. I find it very difficult to detect any *substantive* difference between the central recommendations of the contributors and the core position of any reasonably sophisticated advocate of the *Christ transforming Culture* position. Perhaps we can get at this point best by laying out some of the criticisms leveled at the Reformed approach—which, according to the editor, is "vulnerable to devastating objections" (Menuge, p. 44).

The central complaint seems to be that the Reformed approach is vitiated by "a utopianism which underestimates the continuing power of sin" (Menuge, p. 44). After all, although the Reformed position "affirms the universality of sin," it "maintains that cultures can be converted" (Menuge, p. 42). Veith, while expressing admiration for the Reformed approach, also asserts that the Reformed position "underestimates the effect of the Fall and the scope of human sinfulness. No human being, much less a culture, can in fact keep God's Law. No earthly kingdom, even one ruled by or consisting of Christians, can be a utopian paradise this side of Eden" (p. 135). The Reformed approach, in short, in its starry-eyed obliviousness to the ubiquity of human sin, is blind to the impossibility of the kind of utopian aspirations often pursued by Reformed Christians (such as the Puritans). By contrast with the Reformed approach, the Lutheran position "is completely realistic about the extent of human sin and the continuing need of law to control it" (p. 41). Because Lutherans emphasize the ineradicability of human sin—even Christians are always saints *and* sinners—they realize that their God-imposed obligation to engage with culture will inevitably fail to satisfy God's Law. What recommends the Lutheran position—the Lutheran Difference, as several contributors call it—is that it advocates cultural and political engagement but expects limited success and thus is not vulnerable to confusing human accomplishments with divine projects.

This contrast, however, is entirely illusory. No reasonably sophisticated Reformed thinker will venture the proposition that cultures can be converted or that we human beings, even with divine aid, are able to create a utopian paradise. Indeed

it is passing strange to characterize the heirs of John Calvin—of *total* depravity fame—as underestimating the pervasiveness and ineradicability of human sin. Calvin's heirs do, in fact, explicitly affirm the sinfulness of all human endeavors and our consequent inability to achieve our utopian aspirations.<sup>1</sup>

If there really is a substantive difference between the position defended in *Christ and Culture in Dialogue* and the Reformed approach, it seems to me, it does involve the implications of how sin mars even our best efforts. So far as I can tell, the central difference between the contributors to *Christ and Culture in Dialogue* and a Reformed thinker like Nicholas Wolterstorff is a disagreement about the "noetic consequences of sin," its effect on human reasoning. Wolterstorff believes that our cognitive capacities are marred by sin, such that we might very well be unable to determine how we ought to organize society, reform culture, etc. without having recourse to divine revelation. Thus, for example, in explicating the Reformed approach, he writes: "Why were the Calvinists so persuaded that the social structures as presented to us are fallen? And where did they get their guidelines for reform? . . . The answer is clear: it is the Word of God, presented to us in the Bible, that shows up for us the corruption of our social order. And it is the same Word of God that provides us with our fundamental pattern for reform" (p. 18). In consequence of his understanding of the noetic effects of sin, Wolterstorff advocates that Christians employ their theological resources—the Bible in particular—to determine the respects in which society needs reformation: divine revelation provides normative guidance as to how Christians ought to act in the public, in academia, in their "secular" vocations generally.

The contributors to this volume seem much more wary of such appeals to explicitly theological considerations in public discourse, but considerably more confident in our ability to know, independently of divine revelation and on secular grounds, just which political and economic institutions best serve the common good, which aspects of culture stand in need of reform, etc. Expressing a sentiment that pervades *Christ and Culture in Dialogue*, Veith claims that "while both kingdoms have legitimate claims, they are not to be confused with one another. The secular values of the culture are not to be imposed on the church. Nor may the spiritual realm be imposed on the secular culture. Saving faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit and cannot be a matter of coercion. Nor can the freedom created by the Gospel be applied to unbelievers, who are still in their sins." Explicating this approach a little later, Veith draws out an important implication: "Christians exercising their vocations in the secular culture must assess their activity in secular terms . . ." (Veith, pp. 139, 140). I take this latter claim to deny what Wolterstorff affirms: that appeal to

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<sup>1</sup>. See, for example, Nicholas Wolterstorff (1981), *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, chapter one.

religious grounds in public discourse is appropriate. In determining how culture ought to be reformed, the Christian must employ her understanding not of what the Word of God requires but of what makes sense on secular grounds.

This seems to me to be the fundamental difference between the Lutheran position, as defended in *Christ and Culture in Dialogue*, and the Reformed approach. I obviously won't be able to settle the matter as to which of the two approaches is more defensible here. It might be helpful, however, to bear in mind that what seems plausible on secular grounds varies from culture to culture, that some cultures are systematically corrupt, such that, if one relies solely on secular grounds in determining how one ought to act in the public realm, one might be inclined to go along with some pretty horrible things. Hitler—and many Christians in Nazi Germany—thought that National Socialism was *very* plausible on secular grounds: indeed, according to Hitler, "National Socialism is a cool and highly reasoned approach to reality based on the greatest of scientific knowledge and its spiritual expression" (Burleigh, 2001, p. 253). The possibility that we are ensconced in a comparably, though differently, corrupted cultural milieu might make us skeptical of staking so much on the secular considerations available to us.

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**David I. Smith and Barbara Carvill. (2000). *The Gift of the Stranger: Faith, Hospitality, and Foreign Language Learning*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.**

For decades, much of the pedagogical activity in foreign language teaching has centered on which methodology is the best. Starting with the traditional "read and translate" approach, the discipline has experienced rival designs, including audio-

lingual, communicative, humanistic, proficiency-oriented and content-based methodologies. And the changing fashions continue to proliferate.

Most foreign language teachers probably use—unapologetically—a combination of the above methodologies, adapting them to their own pedagogical goals and the needs of their students.

Lost in this plethora of methods is a consideration of how values, particularly Christian values, can be taught as part of the foreign language classroom experience. The authors ask, what are the spiritual and moral dimensions of the foreign language experience, and how can these dimensions best be incorporated into the curriculum?

The book opens with a timely review of the historical background of Christian language considerations from Babel to Pentecost, early Christian contributions to foreign language education, and the broadening horizons of language study under the impetus of Luther and Comenius. The authors remind us that, since the time of Israel's departure from Egypt, fellowship before God is ultimately combined with continuing diversity of language, "a diversity we so often experience as barrier and struggle . . . yet we can learn from Pentecost that our solutions to the fragmentation we face will not be genuinely redemptive if they underestimate or trample on human diversity, including diversity of language" (p. 15). Thus, to ask about the relationship between Christian faith and foreign language education is not to ask an empty or meaningless question.

What can Christian language teachers do to reflect Christian faith in their teaching? The authors center their response on the biblical concepts of the *stranger* and Christian *hospitality*. Strangers in any land, particularly those who do not speak the language of the host country, endure all kinds of tribulations. In the foreign language classroom, the teacher is therefore challenged to help students experience the hardships of being a stranger. This is done, not by making language learning as safe and pleasurable as possible, but by providing students with opportunities to see what happens to them when communication breaks down and helping them to develop strategies for handling such crises in the target language. Ultimately, this will help the student become a "good" stranger in a foreign country or even in the less threatening atmosphere of the classroom.

This concept is illuminated by a story of a young German who was visiting a relative in Beverly Hills. The concept of *spazierengehen*—taking a walk—is deeply ingrained in German culture. In the United States the institution of *neighborhood watch* is just as strong a part of our culture. The young German was thus shocked when, after taking a long walk through a wealthy neighborhood, he was greeted by the local police upon returning to his host's back door. In presenting this story, the authors encourage discussion of cultural differences which go beyond such topics as what the French eat for breakfast, the layout of a typical Spanish home, or current German teenage slang. They call for our students to become strangers who are able to understand and articulate in the target language the reasons for intercultural



misunderstandings and breakdowns, and to help resolve them.

So many foreign language textbooks seek to prepare the student for superficial "tourist" experiences. U.S. citizens in foreign countries are often more intrigued with monuments than with people. Each year thousands of them pass through many European countries without talking to one native other than their tour guide or the pretzel seller on the corner. They *photograph* the country, but they don't really see it or feel it or understand it. The tourist stranger remains just that, a stranger among strangers. While tourism can be a pleasant and valuable pastime, by itself it cannot be the primary reason for learning a foreign language. Consider the difference in mindset between the traveler who has just completed a tour of "six European countries in 9 days" and a Peace Corps volunteer who has just spent two years seeking to improve health care in a remote part of the Philippines, being a "blessing as a stranger" to the poor people of that country.

What about the foreign language learner as host? As standards of living increase across much of the world, Americans are more and more finding themselves hosting foreign visitors, often in student exchanges, which have proliferated in recent years. Here, too, knowledge and understanding of a foreign culture must go deeper than merely being able to order a burger and fries. Native German exchange students in the United States who attend a local high school basketball game might be surprised when the game is preceded by the singing of the *Star Spangled Banner* and possibly even the *Pledge of Allegiance* to a large flag prominently displayed on the gymnasium wall, ceremonies which Americans take for granted and even demand. Americans might be surprised that German schools do not ordinarily have a German flag flying in front of the school and that the German national anthem is much less frequently sung. This cultural difference is rooted in the Nazi era, when Germans were forced to display all kinds of patriotic symbols and to sing enthusiastically nationalist songs and even recite prayers which glorified Hitler more than God. A dedicated foreign language teacher must be critically aware of such cultural differences, especially when they are not included in textbooks which are either innocent or neutral or both in teaching about the foreign culture.

A Christian approach to foreign language instruction can encourage teachers to make adjustments in their pedagogy. It is not uncommon for teachers to begin a September class with a discussion of what the students did during their summer vacation, or, in a first year class, to ask students sitting in a circle to describe their family. A Christian teacher should consider looking at such exercises from the viewpoint of the student in the group whose family could not afford or otherwise take a vacation, or whose father isn't present in the home or is unemployed or unemployable. In being sensitive to such situations, the teacher becomes a channel of grace to the students whose lives don't fit into stereotypical patterns.

The book concludes with an insightful chapter on how to incorporate a more Christian methodology into the foreign language classroom. The authors admit there



are many who would deny it is any more possible to have a Christian methodology than it is to have a "Christian way of boiling water." To be sure, many of their suggestions could be used by non-Christians who simply intend to incorporate more universal human values into their teaching. Such situations, however, do not detract from those whose motivation in life comes from faith in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Many texts tend toward learning units which emphasize how people of different cultures work, shop, play or socialize. The authors suggest, however, that it is possible, even desirable, to discuss more serious value-oriented matters, even in first year courses. Even the simplest word—*bread*—for instance, involves more connotations than being part of a meal. What about those who have little or none? Is it wrong to throw away a piece of bread? Does the Lord's Prayer in Chinese say "Give us this day our daily bread," in a society where rice is the basic source of nourishment? What about the bread of the Last Supper? What other meanings does *bread* have in students' lives? The same activity could be used for a variety of words, such as *light* with its obvious religious meanings and symbols.

Another example of how to bring values quietly and effectively into the mundane world of such grammar topics as comparison of adjectives is through an activity unit which asks the students to place words representing basic aspects of their lives—"bread," "family," "education," "money," "friendship," "television," "water," "faith," "love," etc.—on a grid in descending order of importance to them. They do this in pairs through negotiation. "I think water is more important than money" or "I think television is less important than friendship." What appears to be a simple grammar exercise is in reality both good practice of a grammar topic *and* a discussion about personal values.

Such exercises will not be found in most textbooks, and creating them will be a challenge to teachers of foreign languages, as will the task of finding time to incorporate matters of faith and values when the curriculum also demands that twelve or more grammar topics be adequately covered before state or national achievement tests are taken. But with the help of the excellent examples in this rich text, the Christian foreign language teacher will be inspired to connect issues of faith and values to foreign language study and to do it effectively and meaningfully.†

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# A Final Word

by George C. Heider, President, Concordia University

## Who Will Teach the Next Generation?

Half of all elementary and secondary teachers in the United States will retire in the first decade of the new century, according to an October 2, 2000, *Newsweek* cover story. Given the immense numbers who answered the call to teach us "boomers" in the 1950s and '60s, such a statistic intuitively seems valid. I have no reason to believe that the reality is any different for the schools of the church, either. The same phenomenon is underway at the post-secondary level: here at Concordia University, River Forest, for example, the coming fall will mark the third consecutive year in which roughly ten percent of our faculty will be new to this campus.

We are in the midst of a tidal change of generations in the classroom. Discerning and accepting the fact of such overwhelming change is the first step, but what follows is crucial. Neither hand-wringing (with cries of Ain't it awful ) nor Pollyannaish optimism ( It'll be OK ) will serve us well. We must intentionally intervene in the situation.

First, we must understand that the single most powerful influence on prospective teachers is competent, committed, joyful teachers. The great advantage held by the teaching profession over all others is that children are exposed to practitioners all day long for years. What may not happen enough is the specific encouraging word: You'd make a good teacher. Have you ever thought about it?

Second, we need to do better than pay lip-service to the Pauline notion that laborers are worthy of their hire. Among the schools of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, too many teachers find their careers foreshortened or (worse) embittered by compensation which reflects neither the cost of living nor the value of their ministry. Given our church polity, this problem must be addressed first and most at the congregational level, as pastors and lay leaders agree that it is morally necessary (and good business in the long run) to pay teachers a wage sufficient to attract those who would be servants of God's people, but not paupers among them.

Third, we need to find more ways to enable mature adults to consider teaching as a second career. The Concordias are teaming up to offer the theological component of Lutheran teacher preparation (colloquy) via the Internet. More broadly, much needs to be done to find the happy medium between the spare preparation which reasons that if you know it, you can teach it and a full collegiate course of teacher education.

Pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into the harvest : such a prayer is rightly offered also for teachers. The tasks of recruiting and retaining, of encouraging and enabling, the next generation of Christian teachers demands our service as the hands and voice of God. We have much to do and that right quickly.✠